



Section: Sustainable & Resilient Frontline Communities

A Community-Driven Plan for Climate Justice in King County

Section Summary	171
Introduction	175
Co-development Process with the Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF)	177
Key Focus Areas and Crosscutting Strategies of the SRFC Framework	180
Public & Community Input in the SRFC Section	183
SRFC Alignment with King County Programs	183
How to Read This Section	184
Focus Area 1: Community Leadership and Community-Driven Policy-Making	187
Focus Area 2: Community Capacity Development – Building Capacity with Frontline Communities and Youth	195
Focus Area 3: Equitable Green Jobs and Pathways	201
Focus Area 4: Community Health and Emergency Preparedness	207
Focus Area 5: Food Systems and Food Security	214
Focus Area 6: Housing Security and Anti-Displacement	221
Focus Area 7: Energy Justice and Utilities	228
Focus Area 8: Transportation Access and Equity	232

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Section Summary

As part of King County's commitment to action on climate change and equity and social justice (ESJ), the **2020 SCAP includes a new Sustainable & Resilient Frontline Communities (SRFC) section focused on climate equity and community-driven policy.** Frontline Communities are those that will be disproportionately impacted by climate change; these are the populations that face historic and current inequities, often experience the earliest and most acute impacts of climate change, and have limited resources and/or capacity to adapt. This includes Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants and refugees, people living with low incomes, communities experiencing disproportionate pollution exposure, women and gender non-conforming, LGBTQIA+¹ people, people who live and/or work outside, those with existing health issues (like asthma and heart disease), people with limited English skills, those experiencing pregnancy, and other climate-vulnerable groups.

New Sustainable & Resilient Frontline Communities (SRFC)

section is focused on climate equity and community-driven policy, guided by the Climate Equity Community Task Force.



Eight focus areas prioritize actions that have co-benefits, promote equity, reduce harm, recognize intersectionality and the impact of climate change as a threat multiplier to other social issues such as housing, green jobs and pathways, food security, and environmental health.

Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF), in collaboration with the King County Climate Action Team developed the SRFC framework to identify and address community concerns and issues that intersect with climate change impacts.



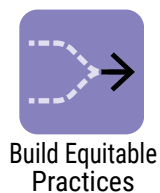
The SRFC framework was developed through a community-driven process where leaders of frontline communities established the goals and guided the priority areas for climate action based on climate justice values and community needs. Approximately 22 community leaders brought experiences, unique strengths, and insights into climate resilience strategies and practices. These leaders formed the Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF) and, in collaboration with the King County Climate Action Team, developed the SRFC framework to identify and address community concerns around climate change impacts.

Foundations of the SRFC Framework for Action

Addressing climate change and social inequities simultaneously in King County will require bold action to prioritize equity and co-benefits (solutions that have multiple benefits for the environment and people beyond just a stable climate), and address climate change as a threat multiplier to other social issues such as affordable housing and food security. The CECTF has developed a SRFC framework for action that builds upon existing structures and practices articulated in the SCAP and incorporates additional insights brought forward from the CECTF.

Key Strategies of the SRFC Framework:

The SRFC framework uses the following six crosscutting strategies across eight focus areas to advance climate and equity in frontline communities:



1. Build King County and community capacity to prioritize climate equity.



4. Address root causes of climate vulnerability by prioritizing comprehensive solutions co-developed with frontline communities that reduce systemic inequities and have co-benefits.



2. Prioritize collaborative language access in partnership with trusted community partners.



5. Advance an equitable climate future and outcomes by investing in climate solutions and opportunities with and for frontline communities.



3. Advance frontline community leadership by investing in long-term community and tribal partnerships, community capacity development, and improved infrastructure for community driven policy and decision-making.



6. Align with and elevate actions in related County plans and programs that support frontline communities and climate resilience.

SRFC Focus Area Highlights and Priorities

The CECTF identified eight focus areas that offer pathways to a more equitable and just climate future for all—a future and vision that is emergent from the unique lived experiences of frontline communities across King County. The six strategies, identified by the CECTF, cut across all eight focus areas. The following focus areas provide a framework for intersectional and equitable climate action in King County:

SRFC Section Highlights and Priorities

Focus Area

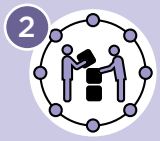
Highlights and Priorities

Community Leadership and Community-Driven Policy



- Develop a framework for continued collaboration with frontline communities and pivoting the CECTF toward SCAP implementation.
- Invest in long-term frontline community partnerships, youth leadership, BIPOC leadership development, and improved infrastructure for community-driven policy and decision-making.
- Build county capacity by providing climate justice resources, guidelines, tools, and climate equity trainings.

Community Capacity Development



- Invest in frontline community partnerships toward climate literacy, community capacity, and youth leadership.
- Expand language access by developing materials in multiple languages in partnership with frontline communities, around climate change connections with focus area themes.
- Support activities and investments that increase the knowledge and capacity of community leaders, youth, and organizations regarding climate change impacts in their communities.

Equitable Green Jobs and Pathways



- Establish an equitable green jobs strategy that advances sustainability and living wage opportunities countywide, while increasing BIPOC representation and access.
- Provide resources to support the development and implementation of a green jobs strategy.
- Support a climate internship program within the Climate Action Team, with intentional opportunities geared toward underrepresented communities.

Community Health and Emergency Preparedness



- Support residents, small businesses, and frontline communities with trainings and educational materials to prepare for, respond to, and bounce forward from emergency events and climate-related health impacts.
- Partner with frontline communities to identify, evaluate, prioritize, and disseminate key climate and health indicators and mapping data.
- Take steps to reduce the impacts of extreme events, including urban heat, on frontline communities.

Food Systems and Food Security



- Support strengthened food access, including advocating for expanded nutrition incentive programs, and improved access to land and technical assistance for socially disadvantaged growers.
- Support access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant foods for all communities, including opportunities to support a healthy and just food ecosystem.
- Partner with frontline communities to support a regenerative and sustainable zero waste food economy framework that prioritizes people and the environment.

SRFC Section Highlights and Priorities *continued*

Focus Area

Highlights and Priorities

Housing Security and Anti-Displacement



- Align with and elevate actions in the Regional Affordable Housing Task Force report that support frontline communities' climate resilience.
- Work with County agency partners, community partners, and other partners to increase opportunities for eco-friendly, affordable, and healthy housing and stable, resilient community environments in frontline communities.
- Identify community-centered anti-displacement strategies and resources that support climate-resilient infrastructure, reduced housing vulnerability, and economic resilience.

Energy Justice and Utilities



- Support education, distribution of tools and resources to increase community access to energy-efficiency programs, opportunities to transition to renewable energy alternatives, and community-based distributed renewable energy.
- Partner with utilities and frontline communities to expand utility assistance and incentive programs to reduce utility burden for frontline communities.
- Advocate for frontline community participation in energy policy, decision-making, and regulatory tables.

Transportation Access and Equity



- Align with and elevate actions in the Metro Mobility Framework that support frontline communities and climate resilience.
- Prioritize frontline communities that are in greatest need of public transit in transit accessibility policies and practices.
- Support the improvement of transit infrastructure through design processes that use a clear climate equity lens, and a meaningful, inclusive, and community-driven planning approach.



This process has been such an authentic engagement of community-based organizations and partners coming together, where people are just really speaking their truth and advocating for their communities, which I love, it's beautiful to see that. Also to be in a space that is created by us and that we honor rather than walking into someone else's space and trying to carve out something for us is very powerful."

- Colleen A.

Introduction

The Sustainable & Resilient Frontline Communities (SRFC) section presents a community-driven framework for addressing climate change concerns and opportunities identified by frontline communities in King County. The section is guided by the recognition that climate change can have disproportionate impacts on many King County communities due to existing and historic racial, social, environmental, and economic inequities. These same inequities can create barriers to frontline community participation in decision-making processes; while these communities hold invaluable experiences, perspectives, and understandings of climate solutions, frontline communities often lack the access, capacity, and/or resources to take bold action or influence local leadership.

Through the commitments outlined in the SRFC section, King County has taken an important step forward in elevating and centering the voices of disproportionately impacted communities in leadership and decision-making, and in community-government partnerships that exemplify equitable engagement. It is important that these efforts

Frontline Communities are those that are disproportionately impacted by climate change due to existing and historic racial, social, environmental, and economic inequities, and who have limited resources and/or capacity to adapt. These populations often experience the earliest and most acute impacts of climate change, but whose experiences afford unique strengths and insights into climate resilience strategies and practices.

Frontline communities include Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants and refugees, people living with low incomes, communities experiencing disproportionate pollution exposure, women and gender non-conforming people, LGBTQIA people, people who live and/or work outside, those with existing health issues, people with limited English skills, and other climate-vulnerable groups.

Frontline Communities are the populations that often experience the earliest and most acute impacts of climate change, such as flooding.

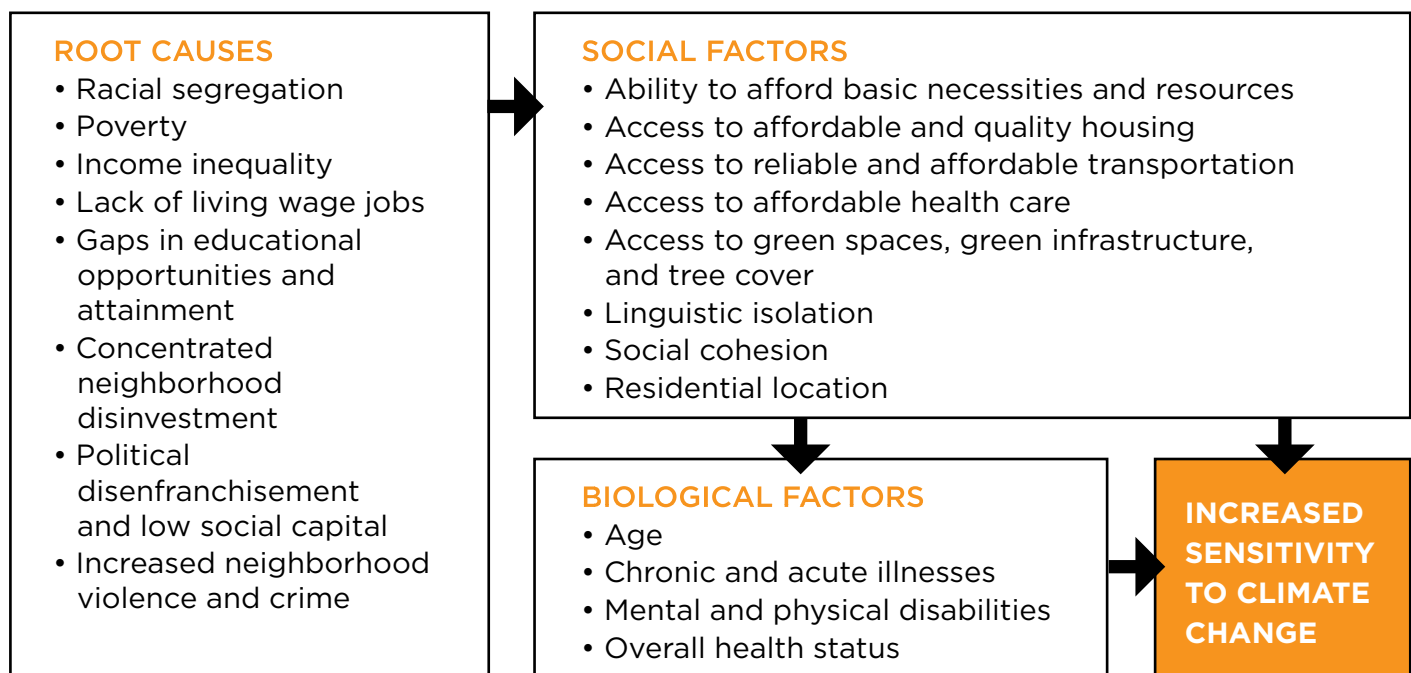


are designed and implemented in partnership with community leaders to address broader inequities because the benefits from sustainability solutions have not always been distributed equitably. As the region transitions away from an extractive fossil fuel-based economy toward a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable King County, it is important that the County's solutions create opportunities that equitably benefit all communities and avoid leaving people behind. By respectfully drawing from the expertise embedded within frontline communities, the County can address root causes of disproportionate climate impacts while also ensuring all current and future community members, and the ecosystems they depend on, are protected from the emerging and ongoing impacts of climate change.

Climate equity ensures that all people have access and opportunity to benefit from climate solutions, while not bearing an unequal burden of the impacts of climate change. This requires a holistic approach to equity in climate work that divides the burden of responding to climate change amongst those who contribute the most to the issue, while sharing the opportunities and benefits that equitable climate action presents with those that are most impacted. *(Adapted from ICLEI² and WRI³)*

Addressing climate change and social inequities simultaneously in King County will require bold action to prioritize equity and co-benefits and address climate change as a threat multiplier to other social issues, including systemic racism. Targeted investments will be needed to advance the strategies in this SRFC framework to address disparities, mitigate impacts, and prioritize co-benefits of climate solutions. King County recognizes that climate and environmental injustices cannot effectively be addressed by one entity, but require partnership, collaboration, and collective action. The SRFC section identifies the ways that King County can lead, convene, support, and advocate for equitable climate action in partnership with communities, organizations, and agencies across the region in a shared commitment to climate equity. The problems and solutions are intersecting; King County's climate efforts should

Root Causes and Factors Affecting Sensitivity to Climate Change



Source: Adapted from "Root Causes and Factors Affecting Sensitivity to Climate Change" in Urban Sustainability Directors Network Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning ⁴

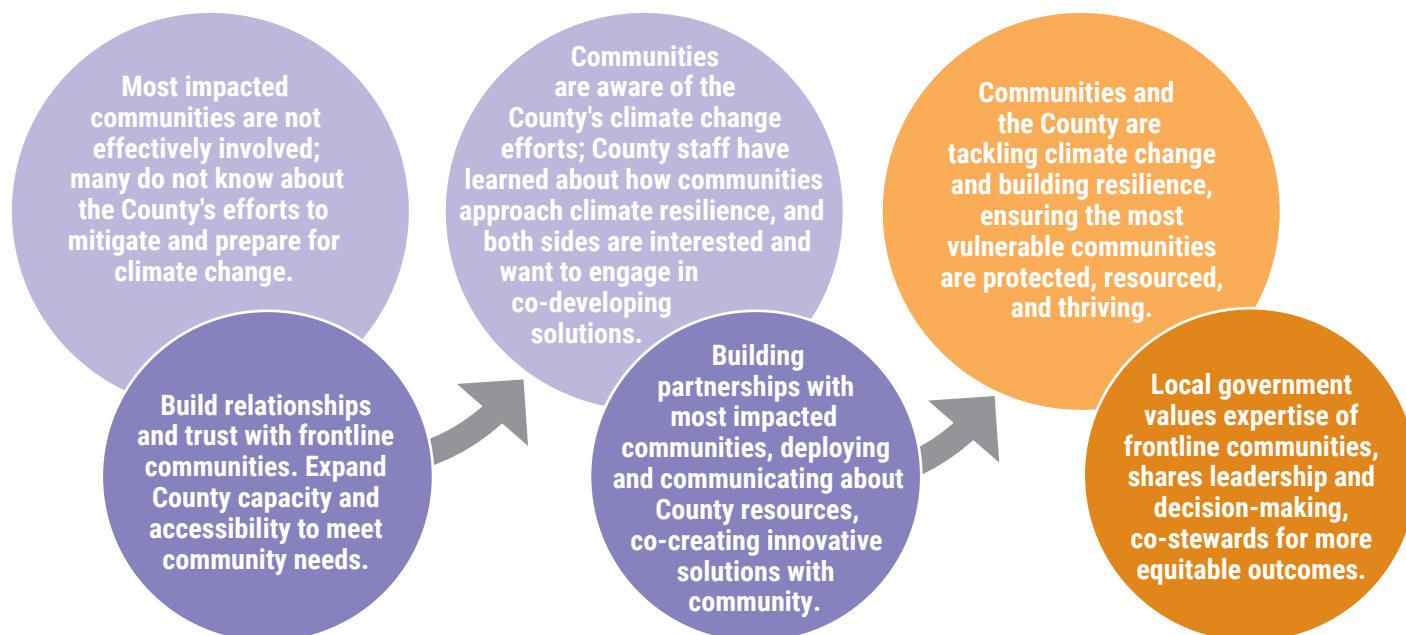
also be coordinated across County departments and be responsive to the ways that communities identify with climate impacts, particularly regarding community resilience, health, and economic capacity. The actions in this section are based on the need to address root causes of climate sensitivity that disproportionately impact frontline communities and develop solutions that address climate change and have co-benefits for social and economic equity. The SRFC section empowers frontline communities to develop community-driven goals at the grassroots level, and to identify how to align County policies, programs, resources, and initiatives to support community-driven climate actions.

Co-development Process with the Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF): Creating the SRFC Framework for Action

Frontline communities hold invaluable experiences, perspectives, and understandings of climate solutions. The SRFC section was developed as a collaboration between the King County Climate Action Team and the **Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF)**. The CECTF is a group of approximately 22 community leaders who represent frontline communities and brought their unique experience and insights to co-create equitable climate solutions for King County. This section reflects the community-identified values, concerns, and visions expressed by the task force over the course of a year-and-a-half-long planning process. The knowledge and expertise presented throughout this section, while offered to ensure representation of frontline community voices and visions in the SCAP, also serves to move forward equitable priorities and practices that provide benefit to and increase climate resiliency for all communities throughout the County and beyond.



Building Toward Shared Leadership and Co-Stewardship with Frontline Communities



Guiding Values identified by the CECTF

Investing upstream in root causes of climate sensitivity and where needs are greatest.

Centering frontline community expertise, stories, and visions as those that are most impacted by climate change. Lead with inclusive, accessible, and engaging processes and practices.

Frontline & BIPOC community leadership –

Support frontline and BIPOC community climate leadership, capacity building, and education. Frontline communities are the experts in their own experiences and know the practices and solutions that are best for their communities.

Anchor policy and decision-making in community identified needs – Practice community-driven policy-making anchored in long-term community partnerships.

Prioritizing strategies that have co-benefits, reduce harm, and recognize intersectionality, as well as have co-benefits for people and the planet. Practice solidarity across frontline communities and recognize that our actions impact others beyond our immediate circles.



CECTF members developing guiding values.

CECTF members represent a diverse range of experiences, subject-matter expertise and geographic, racial, and ethnic diversity. Members include individuals from south King County; communities disproportionately impacted by climate change; communities of color; immigrants; refugees; Native and Indigenous communities; limited-English-proficient populations; communities with existing environmental, social, and health disparities; young leaders of color, those experiencing low incomes, and more.

The CECTF was responsible for identifying and developing the community-driven and equity-oriented climate actions represented in the SRFC section. Through a year-and-a-half-long process, they developed recommendations for the SCAP that recognize the agency of frontline communities in climate work, including actions and activities that mitigate environmental injustices and ensure equitable distribution of environmental benefits. A key responsibility of participants was to bring their own unique voice and experiences, as well as perspectives from their communities to develop a shared vision for sustainable and climate-resilient frontline communities in King County.

CECTF Members present preliminary strategies and actions to King County Climate Leadership Team and King County Executive Dow Constantine.



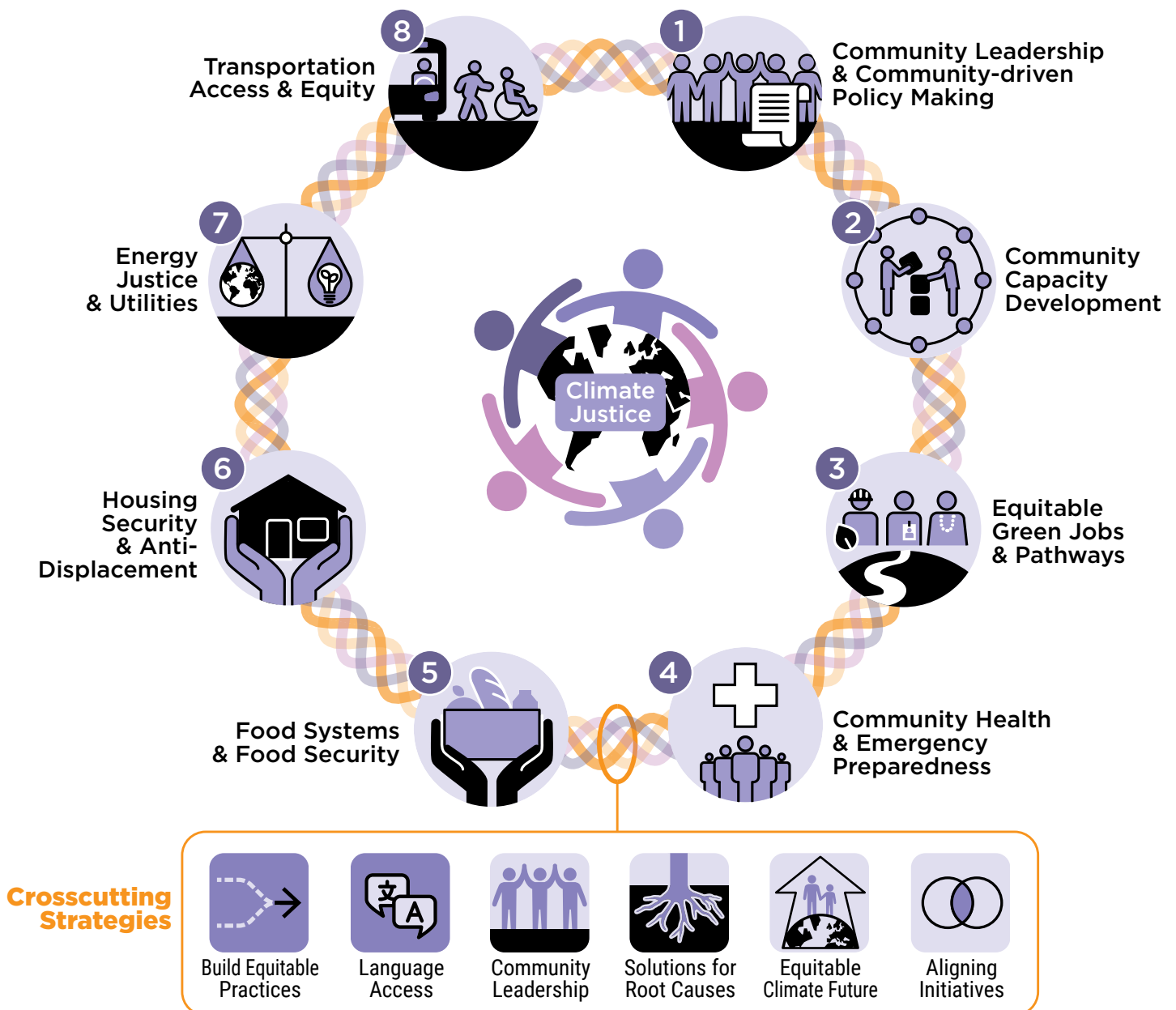
"You know, when you look at the environmental movement today as well as in the past, it's often white faces and we don't see as many People of Color. Still, I think we see that climate change has such a direct impact on us and it's essential that we become involved to mitigate and stop climate destruction. It is not that we don't want to be involved in these traditional movements, but we historically feel alienated from the traditional environmental movement. Certainly, People of Color understand deleterious environmental impacts because we face them every day in our lives and in our community."

[illegible]

Key Focus Areas and Crosscutting Strategies of the SRFC Framework: advancing climate and equity in frontline communities

The CECTF community-driven process identified a structure that outlines eight equity-driven focus areas and several priority actions for each focus area. The focus areas are premised on the six crosscutting SRFC strategies and address key areas of concern across the eight focus areas. The focus areas and associated actions provide pathways to ensure that all communities and all people of King County can benefit from coordinated climate change actions and can contribute their vision and expertise to a shared ecosystem of climate solutions. The SRFC section provides a framework for action to move forward social and economic reforms needed to mitigate disproportionate climate impacts on frontline communities. The focus areas envisioned by the CECTF offer pathways to a more equitable and just climate future for all—and one that is emergent from the unique lived experience and visions of the frontline communities across King County.

The SRFC section highlights eight focus area and associated actions to increase climate resiliency and mitigate disproportionate climate impacts on frontline communities. The focus areas include:



The SRFC framework uses the following six crosscutting strategies across eight focus areas:



Build Equitable Practices

- 1. Build King County and community capacity to prioritize climate equity** through mainstreaming integration of climate equity principles into planning, policy development, implementation, and improved community engagement processes. Promote equitable outcomes through the development of tools, practices, resources, and programs for County staff and communities, addressing systemic barriers to equity undoing institutional racism, and creating intentional SCAP implementation plans that center climate justice. Providing climate justice guidelines, such as requiring climate-related staff participation in equity and climate equity trainings to build skills and increase awareness of structural racism and other systemic issues that contribute to disproportionate outcomes, is a key strategy throughout SRFC priority actions.



Language Access

- 2. Prioritize collaborative language access in partnership with trusted community partners**, through co-creation of culturally relevant climate materials, providing translation and interpretation, and building ongoing partnerships with community organizations to distribute and connect community members to in-language resources. King County is committed to meeting the need identified by the CECTF for more in-language materials, especially ones that are co-created and translated in partnership with frontline communities, around climate change and health, energy, food and food waste, emergency preparedness, and more. Additionally, coordinating messaging in multiple languages across agencies before, during, and after climate-related events is essential to equitable response and preparedness.



Community Leadership

- 3. Advance frontline community leadership by investing in long-term community and tribal partnerships, community capacity development, and improved infrastructure for community-driven policy and decision-making processes.** The most impacted communities have the expertise around what they need to be resilient to climate change, but often lack the access, capacity, and/or resources to take bold action or influence local leadership. Building trusting relationships with frontline communities, including with Tribes and Native communities, and collaborating on climate solutions are critical to creating a foundation for mutually beneficial outcomes and equitable climate goals. The SRFC section seeks to remove barriers and elevate and center the voices of impacted communities in leadership and decision-making in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways through investments in community partnerships, climate literacy, and youth leadership. This includes supporting frontline community leadership development programs and pivoting the CECTF to work toward SCAP implementation.

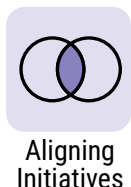


Solutions for Root Causes

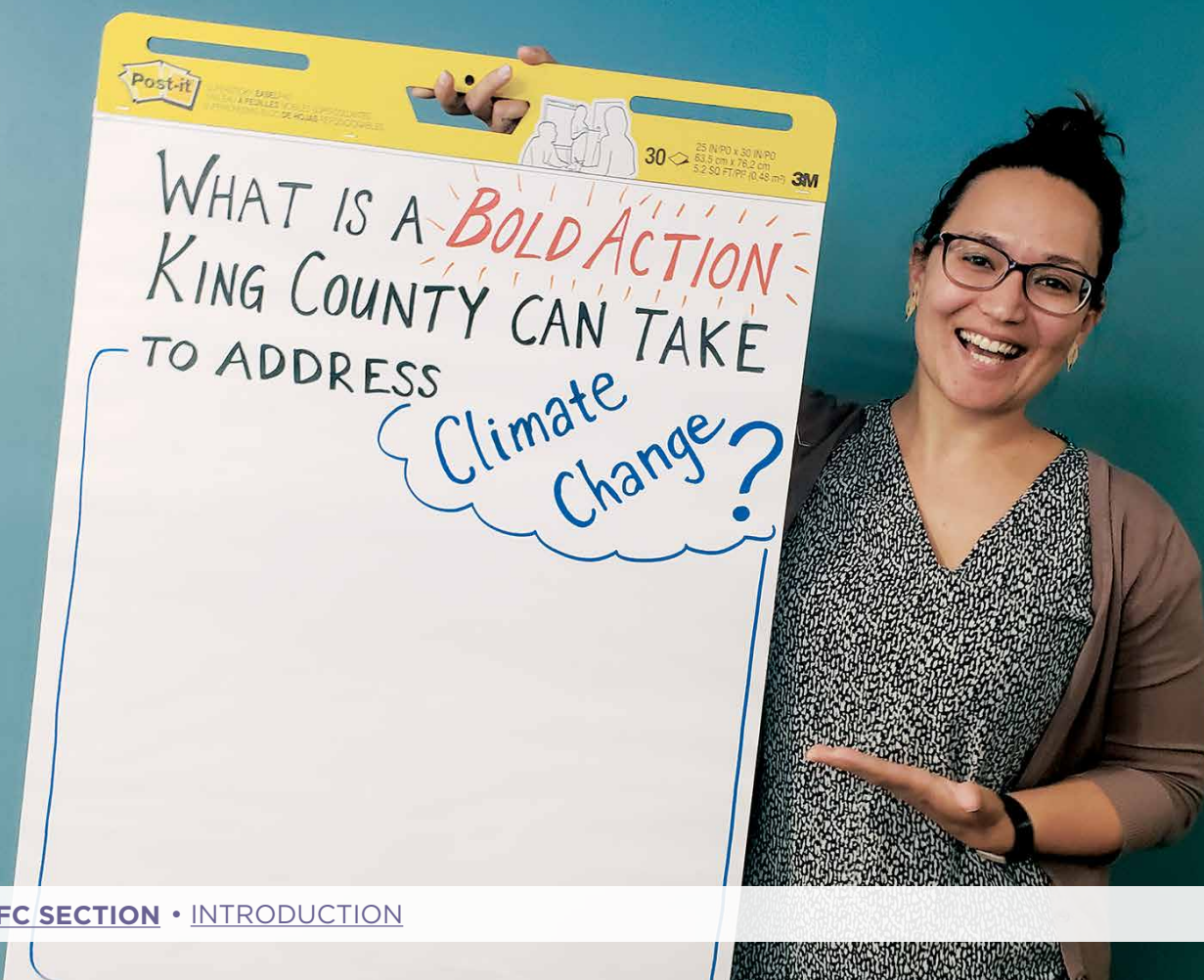
- 4. Address root causes of climate vulnerability by prioritizing comprehensive solutions co-developed with frontline communities that reduce systemic inequities and have co-benefits.** The CECTF specifically recognizes the importance of uplifting climate actions with multiple co-benefits, that promote equity, reduce harm, eliminate barriers, recognize intersectionality and the impact of climate change as a threat multiplier to other social issues (such as affordable housing, green jobs and pathways, food access, economic security, and public and environmental health). For this reason, SRFC climate actions support strengthened social safety nets, and include advocating for expanded programs addressing utility burden and food access, as well as partnerships with the [Reducing GHG Emissions section](#) around actions that reduce GHGs and address affordable housing and transportation access. Additionally, it is important that King County acknowledge structural racism, which has long contributed to the root causes of social and economic inequalities that make frontline communities more sensitive to climate change.



5. Advance an equitable climate future and outcomes by investing in climate solutions and opportunities with and for frontline communities. As the region transitions away from an extractive economy toward a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable King County, it is important that the County's solutions create opportunities and avoid leaving people behind. A just transition to a sustainable future requires planning for and adapting to unintended consequences, removing systemic and economic barriers, prioritizing investments in frontline communities, and creating decision-making tables that support the leadership of frontline community members. Two key priorities include establishing an equitable green jobs strategy that advances sustainability and living wage opportunities, while increasing BIPOC representation in environmental fields and advancing community-based distributed renewable energy for frontline communities.



6. Align with and elevate actions in related County plans and programs that support frontline communities and climate resilience. Collaborate with County departments and programs to integrate climate change and climate justice into their work to develop a cohesive approach to building climate resilience. The SRFC section aims to align with and strengthen actions in partnership with several King County plans and initiatives, notably the [King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan](#) (2016), the [King County Blueprint for Addressing Climate Change and Health](#) (2018), King County [Metro Mobility Framework and Equity Cabinet](#) (2019), [King County Local Food Initiative](#), [Open Space Equity Cabinet](#) Report, [Regional Affordable Housing Task Force Five-Year Action Plan](#), and Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) and Public Health—Seattle & King County (Public Health) programs that aim to serve children, youth, young adults, families, and communities.



Public & Community Input in the SRFC Section

The SRFC development process was guided by the CECTF, but also informed by community presentations, youth workshops and public input from other avenues. Feedback and common themes were integrated into the focus areas and priority actions identified in this section. The County hosted topic based convenings, youth workshops, requested presentations, and public workshops. Online communication was also available through the County's climate website where information about the SCAP update could be found along with an online public input survey and an opportunity to request a presentation/workshop.



CECTF members discussing strategies and actions for the SRFC section.

The major concerns about climate change impacts that were expressed centered around public health, natural disasters, food security, access to healthy food, access to affordable public transportation, lack of paid internships and green jobs, increased heating/cooling costs, lack of access to green spaces, displacement, and environmental justice. Many of the suggestions surrounded addressing these concerns and letting community take the lead in a participatory process to identify solutions. All of these concerns were captured in the CECTF's work and the integration of public input can be seen throughout the eight focus areas. A full summary of the key themes of public input can be found in [Appendix VI: Community Engagement Summary](#).

SRFC Alignment with King County Programs

The SRFC framework is supported by the CECTF, as well as an internal advisory team that includes King County staff from departments and programs who have not traditionally been included in the County's climate plans, but who work on intersecting issues. These include staff representatives that support other community-involved initiatives such as the Regional Affordable Housing Task Force, Open Space Equity Cabinet, Metro Mobility Framework Equity Cabinet, DCHS and Public Health programs that support youth and communities, and the Local Food Initiative.

The SRFC section also aligns with the equity driven goals of several King County plans and initiatives, notably the [King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan](#) (2016), the [King County Blueprint for Addressing Climate Change and Health](#) (2018), [King County Metro Mobility Framework and Equity Cabinet](#) (2020), [King County Local Food Initiative](#), [Land Conservation Initiative](#) and [Open Space Equity Cabinet](#), [Regional Affordable Housing Task Force Five-Year Action Plan](#), and DCHS and Public Health programs that aim to serve children, young adults, families, and communities. In 2010, the King County Council passed landmark Equity and Social Justice legislation (Ordinance 16948) that codified determinants of equity and led to the development and adoption of the ESJ Strategic Plan.⁵



Developing the SRFC vision for an equitable climate future at a CECTF meeting.

The adoption of the ESJ Strategic Plan produced blueprints for actions across all County agencies to identify opportunities to make upstream investments to address root causes of disparities and to tackle the systemic issues that have produced and retain racial and social inequities regarding access to governance tables, inclusion in government processes, and community investments.⁶ The ESJ Strategic Plan is foundational to the integration of equity into the 2020 SCAP, the creation of this new SRFC section, and the coordination efforts across County agencies highlighted in the SRFC section. More recently, in December 2019, King County Council passed Ordinance 19041, which required the inclusion of the SRFC section in the SCAP and the development of a countywide green jobs strategy that would be created in partnership with the CECTF, labor unions, and internal workforce development.⁷

How to Read This Section

Each of the eight SRFC focus areas are organized in the following format:

Focus area: These are the general issue areas that the SRFC works on.



- **Background:** A brief introduction explaining the connection between the focus area, climate change, and frontline community concerns.
- **Framework for Action:** includes the following items.
 - **Vision:** Bulleted list of aspirational statements outlining the vision and desired outcomes identified by the CECTF when equity is achieved in climate action.
 - **Priority action tables:** organized into categories and presented in a table format, these contain priority actions with supporting information about accountable agencies, the role of King County, and connections and considerations. See next page for example table.
 - **Activities that could be pursued:** The grey box below each priority action category contains potential activities that King County could pursue in the coming years to make progress on or complete the associated priority actions in that category, as identified by the CECTF and King County staff. Not all activities are expected to be completed within the five-year timeframe for the 2020 SCAP, as the activities will continue to be prioritized and refined based on available resources, capacity, conditions, and CECTF feedback. Activities of this nature are specific to the SRFC section.



How to Read Priority Action Tables in the SRFC Section

FOCUS AREA

Category: a grouping of related priority actions

SFRC 1.1.1	Priority Action details and <i>responsible agencies</i> .		
Action Number	<p>Priority Action: a near term action that King County will take in support of broader goals and strategies. Actions will occur by 2025, unless otherwise noted, and many include earlier deadlines. The Executive reports to the King County Council on progress related to each Priority Action every 2 years.</p> <p>Key Departments/Programs: King County agencies that have primary responsibility for engaging in activities and programs to make progress on a priority action.</p> <p>Related Departments/Programs: King County agencies that are partners in the work but do not have primary responsibility; includes thought partners and alignment of complementary work.</p>	King County Role: the County's role(s) in delivering each Priority Action	Connections and Considerations throughout the SCAP, and SRFC crosscutting strategies

Potential activities that could be pursued toward the actions in that category, as identified by the CECTF and King County staff.

King County Role



Implement

An action where King County has a lead role in carrying out the activity—may include cases where King County has direct control over an outcome and possesses or can acquire the necessary tools/staffing to make progress on an action.



Convene

An action where King County needs external partners and collaborators to complete the action and King County is taking an active role in that work by convening partnerships for collective climate action.



Support/Advocate

An action where King County's primary role is supporter and/or advocate for the action. This includes actions that would need to be undertaken by other entities or where King County does not have control over the activities necessary to complete an action.

Connections and Considerations



Public Priority: Responds to a recurring theme heard in 2020 SCAP public engagement process.



Reducing Emissions: Consistent with the priorities of the Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions section.



Fast Start: Priority action to be accomplished by the end of 2022.



Climate Preparedness: Consistent with priorities identified in the Preparing for Climate Change section.



Health Blueprint: Consistent with the priorities of Public Health—Seattle & King County's Blueprint for Addressing Climate Change and Health.

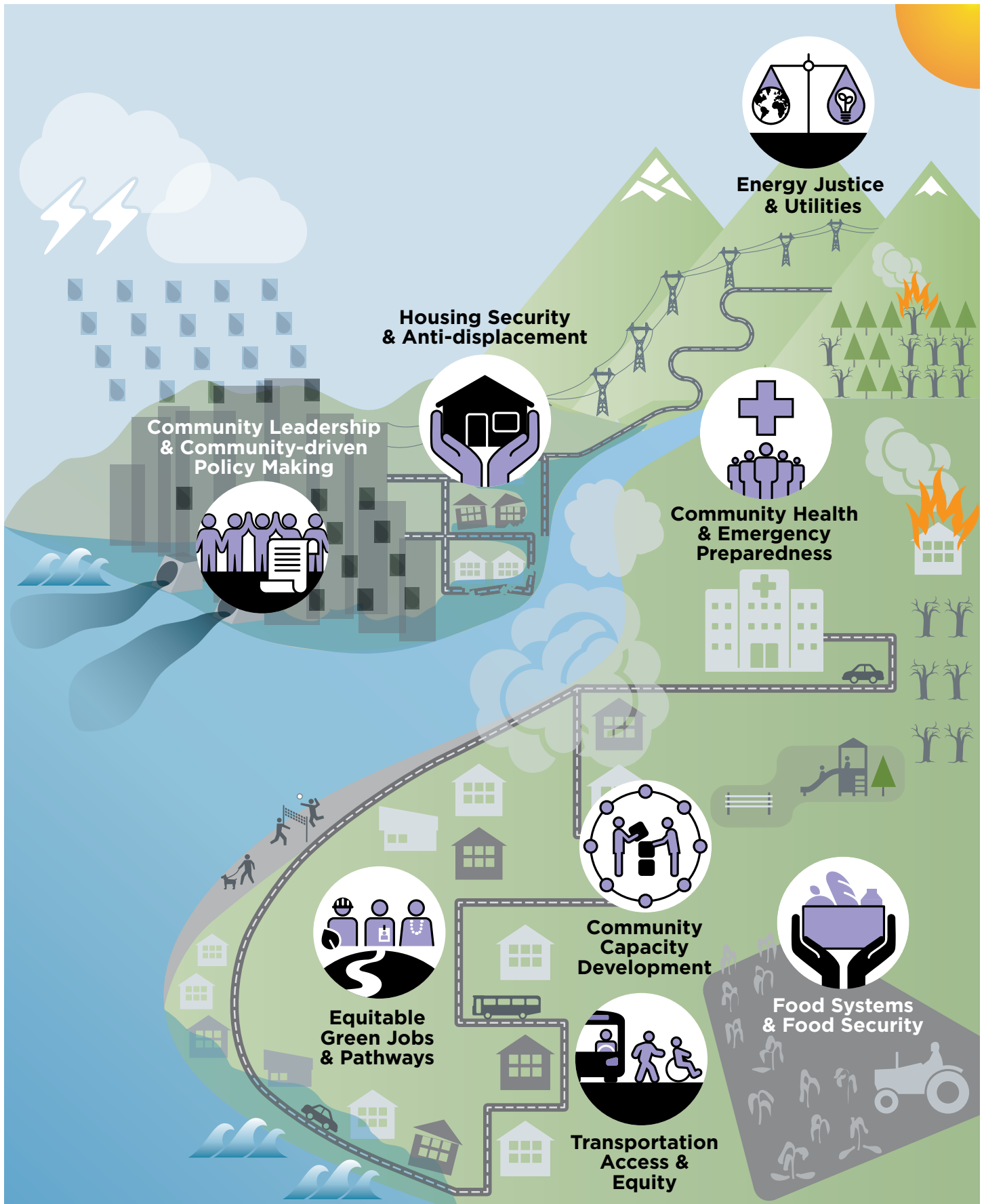


SRFC Crosscutting Strategies: [Definitions](#)



Resource Need: Commitments where there are pending or unmet resource needs to accomplish the work.

SRFC Climate Equity Focus Areas



Focus Area 1 Community Leadership and Community-Driven Policy-Making



Background and Current State

Frontline communities are often hit first and worst by climate change impacts, and many communities experience and have come up with innovative solutions to manage daily impacts.⁸ Yet, despite having critical expertise around the challenges created by climate change and being uniquely equipped to come up with solutions that benefit everyone, members of frontline communities often lack access to decision-making tables due to a wide variety of barriers, from financial to institutional. These communities know best what they need to be resilient to climate change, but often lack the access, capacity, and/or resources to take bold action or influence local leadership.⁹ King County seeks to elevate and center the voices of impacted communities in leadership and decision-making tables, and in community-government partnerships that exemplify equitable engagement.

“Climate resilience means community members exercise self-determination. From practicing collective care to knowing first-hand how seemingly separate issues are interconnected, we have the lived and learned experiences needed to navigate and weather the storms ahead. We must lead. Dedicate seats for frontline community members at decision-making tables. We must be empowered and provided resources from project planning to execution to evaluation – sharing our expertise, defining the problems as we see them, and shaping solutions that maximize benefits for our communities.”

– Vera H.

Combatting climate change requires an integrated, regional response that builds on the shared vision and leadership of the region’s public, private, and civic sectors, as well as the participation of all King County community members. The burdens and benefits of climate change will affect King County’s current and future residents, communities, and businesses in different ways. Equity and social justice are intrinsically linked to climate change, and climate solutions must reflect the needs and feedback from County constituents. King County has begun to build effective partnerships for joint action on climate change, and it is important to continue investing in expanding both County and community capacity for deeper partnership, particularly with communities that have been historically marginalized. In prioritizing a community-driven climate planning process, frontline community members most impacted by climate change share decision-making power with lead government agencies and co-create and identify climate actions and priorities.¹⁰



The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership

STANCE TOWARDS COMMUNITY	1	2	3	4	5	6
IMPACT	<i>Marginalization</i>	<i>Placation</i>	<i>Tokenization</i>	<i>Voice</i>	<i>Delegated Power</i>	<i>Community Ownership</i>
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOALS	Deny access to decision-making processes	Provide the community with relevant information	Gather input from the community	Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into process & inform planning	Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions	Foster democratic participation and equity through community-driven decision-making; Bridge divide between community & governance
MESSAGE TO COMMUNITY	<i>"Your voice, needs & interests do not matter"</i>	<i>"We will keep you informed"</i>	<i>"We care what you think"</i>	<i>"We can't do this well without you"</i>	<i>"Your leadership and expertise are critical"</i>	<i>"We want this to work so we support equitable processes led by community"</i>
ACTIVITIES	Closed door meetings Misinformation	Fact sheets Open Houses Presentations Billboards Videos	Public Comment Focus Groups Community Forums Surveys	Community organizing & advocacy Interactive workshops Polling House meetings Community forums	MOU's with Community-based Organizations Consensus building Citizen advisory committees Participatory Action Research	Community-driven planning Community Organizing Open Planning Forums with Citizen Polling Participatory budgeting
RESOURCE ALLOCATION RATIOS	100% Systems Admin	70-90% Systems Admin 10-30% Promotions and Publicity	60-80% Systems Admin 20-40% Consultation Activities	50-60% Systems Admin 40-50% Community Involvement	20-50% Systems Admin 50-70% Community Partners	80-100% Community partners and community-driven processes ideally generate new value and resources that can be invested in solutions

Source: Adapted from "The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership" developed by Facilitating Power and Movement Strategy Center.¹¹

Traditionally, many local government approaches to community engagement have often taken the form of “inform” or “consult” on The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership (columns 2 and 3), which has the impact of placation and tokenization on communities. This spectrum aligns with the continuum in the [King County Community Engagement Guide](#) that has been integral in expanding the County’s approach to better involve frontline communities in climate programs, and to work toward collaboration with communities as their leadership and expertise are critical to how King County approaches climate change. The most effective and meaningful climate policies and actions will be those that are informed and directed by those that are closest to the problem of climate injustice. To support more equitable processes, King County has invested in working with frontline communities collaboratively around climate action and is committed to creating more opportunities where frontline communities can drive policy-making that directly impacts them (moving along the spectrum of community engagement to column 5). In some cases, King County is not the right entity to lead the work, but rather plays a critical role in uplifting and supporting community-owned and -led projects, research, and programs (spectrum of community engagement, column 6).

Frontline communities most affected by climate change impacts face many barriers to participating in decision-making processes that address climate change, and it is critical that King County continue **supporting community leadership**. Community organizations and frontline communities may not have direct access to decision-making power to contribute their knowledge, expertise, and communities’ priorities in the development of climate solutions. In order for King County to continue to build

“We have to move away from top down policy-making processes towards grassroots, community-driven policy-making for policies to be successful. It is our BIPOC communities who are at the frontlines and experience the impacts of climate and environment first and worst. It is the policymakers’ responsibility to listen to our communities’ priorities and expertise. As a brown person who also holds a degree in urban planning, I’ve seen each time how effective a plan/policy has been when the planning community has followed the leadership of impacted communities instead of rubber stamping their participation. The CECTF was such an intentional space for all of us members where we brought our whole selves, our experiences, and contributed to the SCAP.”

- Debolina B.

Mother Africa Receiving 2019 King County Green Globe Award.



King County Community Engagement Continuum



on the work of the CECTF, it is important that it continue to demonstrate a commitment to **community-driven policy-making**.

Part of **building relationships and trust** with frontline communities is also acknowledging inherent power dynamics, privilege, and historic harm; this is critical to creating foundational, long-term, authentic partnerships between government and communities. King County can continue to build its staff and capacity to use positional power to help organizations achieve their missions and be prepared to advance equity in alignment with the community partnership goals in the [Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan](#).

Young people are inheriting the future shaped by the decisions community members in King County and beyond are making right now, so the County must identify opportunities for **elevating youth leadership** in guiding climate priorities and influencing decision-makers. Although youth may be taught about climate change, there are a lack of resources and pathways to get involved in *leading* climate action, King County recognizes that their voices are more critical than ever in climate action.

Members of the Seattle Youth Climate Action Network lead a youth caucus at a SCAP public workshop.



"I think what I liked the most [in the SRFC SCAP development process] is how it is driven by community from different organizations, different agencies, different perspectives. When you bring community together they can find their own solutions themselves and also hold agencies and governments accountable through this process. The most important thing about this work is that this work has to be continuous, it can never fall to the wayside, or inequities will continue. Continuous engagement, that we bring in new people, new leaders to learn this work so that this work will continue."

- Niesha F.

"Having folks compensated for their time [on this task force] is a needed component for effective community engagement that's not done very often and it signals to the community that the county values their time and opinion."

- David M.

The framework for action:

The CECTF developed a **vision for Community Leadership and Community-Driven Policy-Making** in an equitable climate future. The vision statements below guided the development of priority actions that identify steps toward reaching climate equity in King County.

- Frontline communities are involved in developing and leading climate policy changes in the county government.
- Local government recognizes the leadership, knowledge, and experience of frontline community members and the value in having those most impacted by climate change as partners in shaping climate policy.
- Frontline community members can grow their influence and impact in informing policy-makers and local government operations around climate change and climate justice.

Based on this vision, the following table outlines priority actions in **Supporting Community Leadership, Community-Driven Policy-Making, Relationship and Trust Building**, and **Elevating Youth Leadership**. Each action identifies key and related county departments and programs that support activities toward achieving the action, as well as the role of King County as an implementer, convener, and/or supporter/advocate. Additional connections to other sections of the SCAP and considerations are indicated by SCAP-wide icons. Effective and equitable collaborations are a shared priority with the [Climate Preparedness section](#), this work will be coordinated to achieve actions with overlapping objectives and develop joint performance measures.

“When you build authentic relationships and see people in the community and see the good work they are doing and it is not transactional. You can get a lot done but you have to first have that trust. We view community members, folks from black and brown communities, elders, and youth as experts. They are willing to open up more because they feel safe and seen. We are not trying to tell them this is how it should be, but they are telling us their truth about what is happening in their community.”

- Jill M.

CECTF members who presented climate change and health priorities to the King County Board of Health



FOCUS AREA 1: COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN POLICY-MAKING

1.1 Supporting Community Leadership

Priority Actions

- SRFC 1.1.1 **Provide and support community organizations and climate justice leaders with tools, materials, compensation, professional development, and technical assistance to effectively engage and share their expertise with King County and other jurisdictions in climate action, policy, and advocacy across sectors.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: DNRP, Metro, OESJ, Public Health

King County Role



Implement

Connections and Considerations



Public Priority



Resource Need



Community Leadership

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **1.1 Supporting Community Leadership**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Provide frontline community organizations and leadership with technical assistance, workshops, trainings, registration scholarships, professional development opportunities and/or materials that further climate leadership.
- Seek funding partnerships to support frontline community organizations in developing and/or continuing their own climate justice programs, trainings, and/or pilot projects, and follow their lead in engaging communities on climate action.

1.2 Community-Driven Policy-Making

- SRFC 1.2.1 **Document the CECTF policy development framework and develop King County capacity for authentic and collaborative community-driven climate policy development processes.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

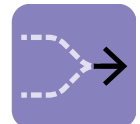
Related Departments/Programs: DNRP, Metro, Public Health, OESJ



Implement



Fast Start



Build Equitable Practices



Community Leadership

- SRFC 1.2.2 **Develop a framework in partnership with frontline communities for continued collaboration with and leadership of the CECTF in implementing community-driven climate policy and programs, such as developing qualitative and quantitative measures for climate justice.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: DNRP, Metro, Public Health, OESJ, DCHS



Implement



Climate Prep.



Community Leadership



Equitable Climate Future



Solutions for Root Causes

1.2 Community-Driven Policy-Making

Activities that could be pursued toward the actions in **1.2 Community-Driven Policy-Making**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Document the equitable community-driven climate policy-making framework used for the SRFC section, identify ways to maintain the institutional knowledge of this body of work to provide guidance for future community-driven policy development processes.
- Work with CECTF members to develop a framework and charter for continued engagement of the CECTF and frontline communities in implementing SCAP actions.

1.3 Relationship and Trust Building

Priority Actions

King County Role

Connections and Considerations

- SRFC 1.3.1 **Build, cultivate, and support authentic relationships with frontline community members and organizations by collaborating on projects, providing resources, using positional power to help organizations achieve their missions, participating in community events, and hosting community events and listening sessions.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, Departmental ESJ Teams

Related Departments/Programs: OESJ, Executive Office, DNRP, Metro, Public Health, DCHS, DLS



Convene



Resource Need



Community Leadership



Support/Advocate



Equitable Climate Future

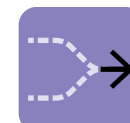
- SRFC 1.3.2 **Build King County capacity to engage with frontline communities in ways that acknowledge inherent power dynamics, privilege, and historic harm to create foundational long-term partnerships by preparing staff with knowledge, awareness, ground rules, tools, background in environmental/climate justice, and equity trainings in alignment with the goals of the Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, Departmental ESJ Teams, OESJ

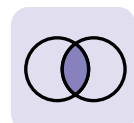
Related Departments/Programs: Executive Office, DNRP, Metro, PH, DCHS, DLS



Implement



Build Equitable Practices



Aligning Initiatives



Solutions for Root Causes

Activities that could be pursued toward the actions in **1.3 Relationship and Trust Building**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Build positive presence in frontline communities through sponsorships, collaboration, participation in community events, listening sessions, and/or by providing gathering space.
- Require that all King County staff working on climate-related programs attend climate justice issue-specific trainings, such as King County's Equity and Social Justice Fundamentals, trainings on the social determinants of health, and/or climate equity training.
- Increase staff knowledge, skill, and abilities to effectively serve communities of color and limited-English-proficient and low-income communities.

1.4 Elevating Youth Leadership

Priority Actions

- SRFC 1.4.1 **Elevate youth voices by working with young leaders around climate action, creating opportunities for youth leadership in decision-making spaces, and partnering with youth development programs.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: Metro, DNRP, DCHS

King County Role



Convene



Support/
Advocate

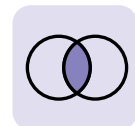
Connections and Considerations



Public
Priority



Community
Leadership



Aligning
Initiatives

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **1.4 Elevating Youth Leadership**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

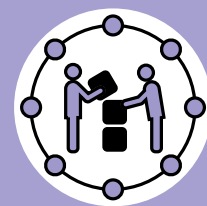
- Uplift youth voice by bringing youth into decision-making spaces, participating in youth-led climate efforts, partnering with young leaders around climate action, providing opportunities for youth to connect with leadership, working with youth development programs, creating mentorship opportunities and/or providing a media platform for youth.

High School interns with the WTD Clean Water Ambassadors Internship Program on a tour of the Brightwater Treatment Plant.



Focus Area 2

Community Capacity Development – Building Capacity with Frontline Communities and Youth



Background and Current State

Combatting climate change requires an integrated, regional response that builds on the shared vision and leadership of the region's public, private, and civic sectors, as well as the participation of all King County community members. King County has begun to build effective partnerships for joint action on climate change, but needs to continue to invest in **building County capacity and systems to support communities** through deepened external engagement, while simultaneously **growing community capacity** to engage on climate change. Building off the work of the 2015 SCAP, it is important to remove barriers for frontline communities to participate in collaborative climate solution development, while also building climate and environmental justice literacy for both community members and government staff. County staff can not anticipate all the barriers frontline communities face in community engagement processes but by building authentic relationships with community members, staff might be better able to learn what communities need to mitigate these barriers.

Capacity building activities, including expanding **community education, supporting youth education**, and investing in awareness building, **language access**, technical assistance, and leadership development, are critical to growing the number of local frontline

"I think language access is always a must. And also there's no one-size-fits-all way to do things. Different groups of people have different needs. The County has to be innovative and proactive in addressing the different needs of different communities and empower them to embrace current and future challenges led by climate change."

- Karia W.

Healthy King County Coalition (HKCC) Built Environment Leadership Training in 2019. King County supported this community-based training and shared information about climate change.



community champions and future leaders that can continue to support climate action. CECTF members identified that some of the biggest barriers to participation for members of their frontline communities in climate work are a lack of culturally relevant education opportunities, in-language and culturally responsive educational materials, and resources (time, capacity, funds, etc.).

Education can be a tool of empowerment. It provides the opportunity to understand current issues and brainstorm solutions. When climate justice education is taught in schools and communities, it can lead to more participation within society. A report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization found that when climate change is taught, it increases the participation of youth, especially young women, in working on climate-related solutions.¹³ The same is true for community members. The more one knows about an issue and how it impacts them, the more likely they are to be involved.

Currently, there is strong desire for accurate, science-based, and in-language climate change **community education** opportunities for community members, both young and old. Frontline communities want to know what to expect from climate change both locally and globally, what they can do to begin preparing for climate impacts, and how to take action to reduce GHGs. Education will not only allow people to prepare for climate change, but it can also provide the foundational knowledge to empower them to act. Even though all members of society would benefit from this knowledge, King County must ensure that those who are being directly impacted have direct access to this knowledge. These are the County’s frontline communities that disproportionately face the impacts of climate change because of redlining, historical marginalization, environmental injustices, and institutional racism. Adults and youth in frontline communities who see and feel the impacts of climate change the most are often unable to access the foundational knowledge of climate change, the impacts they should expect, and how they can tackle climate change.

Improving access to climate change information and focusing on climate change education also drives broad support for climate action and builds political and social capital around community-supported decision-making. Further engagement also creates connection across communities, increasing resilience during extreme events, as well as elevates the concerns of frontline communities, equity, and climate justice into climate discourse.¹⁴ Being able to effectively engage in climate action conversations is critical to working toward equitable climate outcomes, and especially in ensuring our frontline communities are invested in—and included—in King County climate actions.



Examples of climate infographics co-created with community organizations and translated into Samoan, Arabic, Spanish, and Chinese.

The framework for action

The CECTF developed a **vision for Community Capacity Development** in an equitable climate future. The vision statements below guided the development of priority actions that identify steps toward reaching climate equity in King County.

- King County residents, especially frontline communities and youth, have a strong understanding of climate change impacts on their communities and possess foundational knowledge that is grounded in traditional knowledge and the history of environmental injustice.
- Frontline communities recognize the connection between their experiences and climate change impacts, and have the skill set and tools to articulate and inform climate policies.
- King County supports and invests in frontline community organizations to build their capacity to address climate change impacts.
- Frontline communities have the capacity and resources to educate and organize their own communities (and in their own languages) around addressing climate change.



Our youngest participant at the King County 2019 SCAP Public Workshop at Highline College.



Youth caucus at King County 2019 SCAP public workshop.

Workshop in partnership with Mother Africa to co-create and translate a climate change graphic into Arabic.



Based on this vision, the following table outlines priority actions in **Growing Community Capacity, Building County Capacity and Systems to Support Communities, Community Education and Language Access, and Youth Education.**

Each action identifies key and related county departments and programs that support activities toward achieving the action, as well as the role of King County as an implementer, convener, and/or supporter/advocate. Additional connections to other sections of the SCAP and considerations are indicated by SCAP-wide icons. Effective and equitable collaborations and engagement are a shared priority with the Climate Preparedness section, this work will be coordinated to achieve overlapping actions and develop joint performance measures.

"...because [the people I work with] came from different cultures, when you start talking to them about climate change you have to explain it with different context and I've noticed people start talking about their countries and how planting seasons have changed and they think the government should do something for the environment. People like me and others who are on the [task force], can understand what is going on and can communicate to our communities."

- Njambi G.

"I think resilience means to keep everyone aware, conducting outreach on how we can minimize our footprint with energy usage, or sharing resources that could potentially reduce the risks of climate change impacts. Civic engagement is a big part of that."

- Tweetie F.

Participants using translation services at King County 2019 SCAP public workshop at the University of Washington.



FOCUS AREA 2: COMMUNITY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Growing Community Capacity

Priority Actions

SRFC 2.1.1 **Grow leadership capacity in frontline communities by co-creating inclusive climate resources, building a shared climate literacy, supporting leadership development opportunities and trainings, and reducing barriers to participation for frontline communities to engage in and influence King County's climate and environmental work.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: DNRP, Metro, PH, DCHS, DLS

King County Role



Implement



Convene

Connections and Considerations



Public Priority



Community Leadership



Equitable Climate Future

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **2.1 Growing Community Capacity**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Support and/or sponsor community-led leadership development programs that empower frontline community members to be active on boards, commissions, or other leadership bodies across King County.
- Partner with community organizations to create workshops and trainings focused on climate justice that are inclusive and accessible to frontline communities and builds support for an environmental/climate justice network.

2.2 Building County Capacity and Systems to Support Communities

SRFC 2.2.1 **Strengthen King County climate justice efforts by aligning related work across departments, increasing staff capacity to address climate inequity and build authentic community and tribal partnerships, addressing access barriers to sustainability-related programs, and providing guidance on addressing climate inequities.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, OESJ

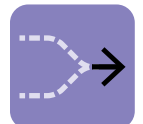
Related Departments/Programs: DNRP, Metro, Public Health, DLS, DES (OEM), DCHS



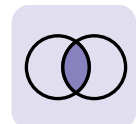
Implement



Climate Prep.



Build Equitable Practices



Aligning Initiatives

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **2.2 Building County Capacity and Systems to Support Communities**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Establish an inter-departmental work group focused on climate justice topics.
- In partnership with frontline communities, the Preparing for Climate Change section, and in alignment with state-level environmental justice efforts, develop metrics/indicators to assess resilience of frontline communities, including qualitative metrics that incorporate benefits and burdens to low-income populations and BIPOC communities.
- Collaborate with frontline communities to create guidelines for inclusive community building to develop climate partnerships that center community values and establish trust. Share these guidelines with the interdepartmental climate justice workgroup.

2.3 Expanding Community Education and Language Access

Priority Actions

- SRFC 2.3.1 **Co-design and implement culturally relevant communication and education strategies that best inform frontline communities about climate change and intersecting climate justice issue areas, including co-creating tailored materials with frontline communities that are culturally relevant and in accessible languages.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: Public Health, DES (OEM), DNRP, DCHS, Metro

King County Role



Implement

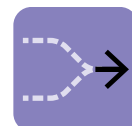


Convene

Connections and Considerations



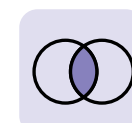
Public Priority



Build Equitable Practices



Language Access



Aligning Initiatives

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **2.3 Expanding Community Education and Language Access**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Partner with frontline communities to co-create culturally relevant climate education materials that are accessible, inclusive, and in-language, connecting climate justice to other intersecting topics (e.g., housing, health), and that are translated in partnership with communities.
- Collaborate with communities to develop an interpretation/translation resource list and common climate terms list in multiple languages. Encourage usage of climate language resources across communications teams that work on climate-related issues.

2.4 Supporting Youth Education

- SRFC 2.4.1 **Intentionally partner with youth-serving organizations and educational institutions across King County to make climate change and climate justice education more accessible, especially in frontline communities.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: Public Health, DES (OEM), DNRP, DCHS, DLS, Metro



Convene



Support/Advocate



Public Priority



Equitable Climate Future

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **2.4 Supporting Youth Education**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Identify environmental justice and climate change education resources and provide guidance to King County environmental programs, youth-serving organizations, and school programs.
- Partner with youth clubs, teachers, educational institutions, and/or youth-serving organizations to provide climate change workshops, presentations, curricula, field trips, and/or other climate education opportunities, prioritizing areas that rank high in environmental health disparities according to the Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map.
- Partner with the King County Green Schools program to expand edible food waste prevention program and integrate climate change and food in educational opportunities.

Focus Area 3

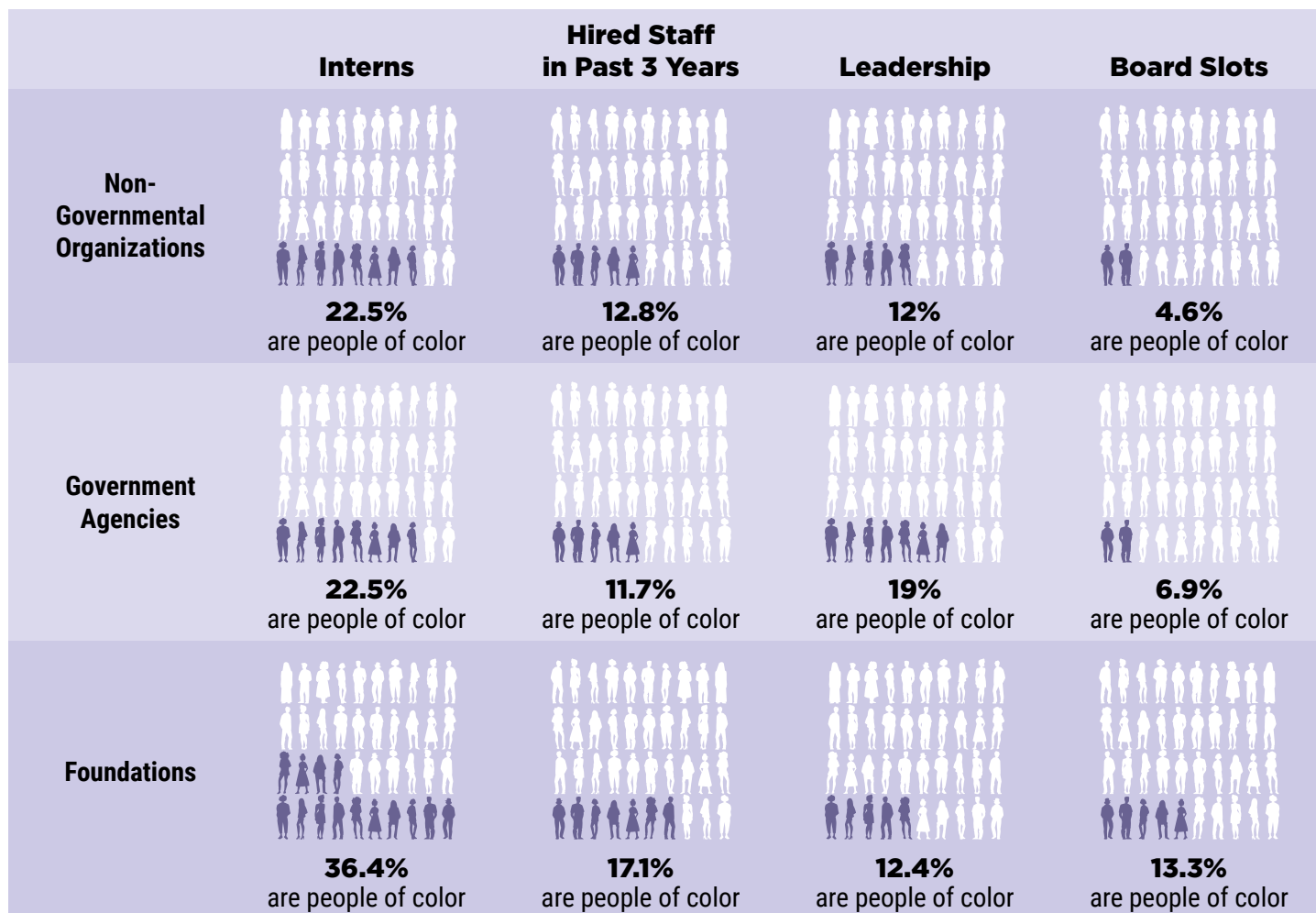
Equitable Green Jobs and Pathways



Background and Current State

The environmental sector is one of the least diverse sectors in the nation, with People of Color making up only 16 percent, at most, of the staff across conservation and preservation organizations, government environmental agencies, and environmental grantmaking foundations.¹⁵ The positions these staff of color hold are concentrated in lower ranks, with People of Color occupying less than 12 percent of leadership roles across an organization.¹⁶ This is despite an increase in racial diversity across the United States, with People of Color currently making up approximately 40 percent of the population.¹⁷ The issue is not that People of Color are not interested in these professions, but rather they face many barriers in both accessing and thriving in them. Major barriers for BIPOC communities entering and progressing in green jobs, such as systemic racism, a white-dominant culture, and lack of access to green jobs and organizations, all contribute to the issue.¹⁸ Low-income communities of color often have firsthand experience dealing with climate impacts and can provide insight into culturally and community-

The Green Ceiling: National Data on Staff Diversity in Environmental Organizations



Source: Adapted from national data from Green 2.0's *The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations*.¹⁹

appropriate solutions. Addressing these barriers to green jobs, will bring diversity of experience and the inclusion of valuable knowledge and skills that could pave the way for innovative solutions to climate change.²⁰ **Building pathways to green jobs across sectors** that help address barriers BIPOC communities face can lead the County in achieving an equitable climate future.

A major focus of the recommendations around green jobs, identified by the CECTF, is on the development of a countywide green jobs strategy. CECTF developed a vision for equitable green jobs in mid-2019, and in December 2019, King County Council passed Ordinance 19041, which required the development of a countywide green jobs strategy that would be created in partnership with the CECTF, labor unions, and internal workforce development.²¹ The goal is to create pathways to a diversity of green jobs that range from a bus driver to a renewable energy technician to an environmental policy analyst. **Building partnerships for a green jobs strategy** will be integral to developing a comprehensive, inclusive, and equitable green jobs strategy.

King County is dedicated to not leaving any communities behind as it transitions to a green economy. The barriers BIPOC communities face in entering the environmental sector also occur in related sectors that will be impacted by climate change. For example, food chain workers are racially and ethnically diverse, but a majority of these workers hold low-level positions and many do not earn living wages.²² Employees who work in industries that are transitioning to more renewable and/or sustainable technologies and strategies need to have the skills and trainings to move into these new green jobs. King County needs to find ways to support these industries in shifting to sustainable and equitable practices while also looking internally at what the County can do to model these just practices.

“Getting into the environmental sector was hard. I started being involved when the opportunity as a youth approached our community. Being part of the first Duwamish Valley Youth Corp was an eye-opener for me to realize all that was happening in my community of South Park. I had always wanted to work representing undocumented and low-income families. [The environmental movement] is such a white-dominated space and sometimes I feel discomfort. The [Green Pathways] fellowship has trained and guided me and the other fellows with mentorship and other forms of support, which have given us tools to navigate the work we are doing. I truly believe the voices of those who are impacted are very important and are the ones that are least heard.”

– Maggie C.

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks Interns at a tree planting event



Furthermore, BIPOC communities, particularly Black communities, are disproportionately incarcerated which can create another barrier to accessing employment and green jobs.

Working toward a just transition to a more equitable, regenerative economy will require that community voices are centered, and workers can transition into green jobs as the landscape of the economy changes.²³

King County government agencies have been working on creating pathways and programs to access green jobs. Examples of these programs include Metro's apprenticeship programs for Building Operator Engineer and Rail Electrical Worker, the Fleet Services Division's mechanic apprenticeship program, and multiple internship opportunities including positions on the Climate Action Team. Continuing these programs and creating new ones tailored toward bringing BIPOC community members into environmental

fields and leadership roles will be important to ensuring King County can transition into new roles as it shifts its operations and technology to reduce GHG emissions.

The framework for action

The CECTF developed a **vision for Equitable Green Jobs and Pathways** in an equitable climate future. The vision statements below guided the development of priority actions that identify steps toward reaching climate equity in King County. CECTF developed a vision for green jobs in mid-2019, and in December 2019, King County Council passed Ordinance 19041, which requires the development of a countywide green jobs strategy.

- King County has an equitable green workforce internally that reflects the diversity of King County communities through workforce development and creating intentional pathways that prioritize frontline and BIPOC communities that have historically been underserved/underrepresented.
- Partner with labor, youth, frontline communities, and other stakeholders to develop a green jobs strategy and evaluate practices to bring communities into green jobs as the County transitions to a green economy.
- King County residents, especially frontline communities, BIPOC and young people, have access to job and career pathways that reflect the diverse skill sets, knowledge systems, experiences and diversity of King county, across sectors and seniority levels.
- As King County moves away from industries that negatively impact the environment, King County partners to create career pathways and connections for employees from legacy industries to transition to new opportunities in the green economy.

Based on this vision, the following table outlines priority actions in **Building Partnerships for a Green Jobs Strategy, Building Pathways to Green Jobs Across Sectors, and Working Toward a Just Transition**. Each action identifies key and related County departments and programs that support activities toward achieving the action, as well as the role of King County as an implementer, convener, and/or supporter/advocate. Additional connections to other sections of the SCAP and considerations are indicated by SCAP-wide icons.



2019 Climate Action Team Interns (from left to right) Zoe van Duivenbode, Jessica Murphy, and Pooja Kumar.

An Equitable Green Jobs & Pathways Strategy Development Process

INITIAL STRATEGY

Included in 2020 SCAP

- Initial strategy that includes recommended next steps to develop a full Green Jobs Strategy.
- Include low-hanging fruit actions including climate internships, expanding existing internships programs, etc.
- Initial budget request based on initial strategy.

DEVELOP FULL STRATEGY

Estimated 2020-2022*

- Full Green Jobs Strategy is developed in partnership with labor, frontline communities, and youth.
- Strategy addresses all aspects listed in the ordinance
- Evaluate budget needs for implementation based on the full strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION

Estimated 2023-2025*

- Implementing actions from initial full green jobs strategy
- Data tracking for recruitment, hiring, retention, pathways, etc.

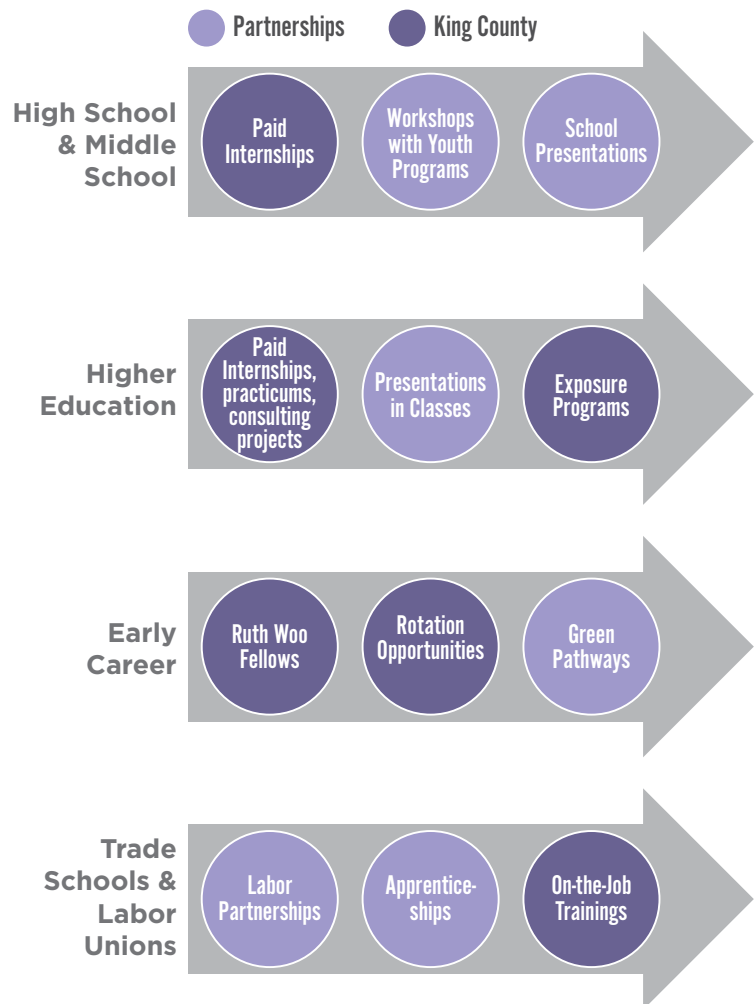
EVALUATION & IMPROVEMENTS

Estimated beyond 2025*

- Evaluate Green Jobs Strategy success and develop a vision for future steps
- Continue to collaborate in partnership with labor, frontline communities, and youth.

* Dependent on resources

Potential Pathway Development



"I just really appreciate the [taskforce] space especially as a Native woman with an environmental science background, I've felt like I have not been included within a lot of the approaches for career pathways within government. I knock on that door and there's no answer, so I felt happy to have some of my expertise utilized. I really think it's important to make sure that race isn't a determinant of your career path. It was cool to me to be able to navigate [this process] because I feel like that's why I subjected myself to college, to be able to work on behalf of our communities being a part of this conversation."

– Pah-tu P.

FOCUS AREA 3: EQUITABLE GREEN JOBS AND PATHWAYS

3.1 Building Partnerships for a Green Jobs Strategy

Priority Actions

SRFC 3.1.1 Partner with frontline communities, CECTF, labor organizations, educational institutions, and youth programs to develop a green jobs strategy that evaluates and establishes pathways to bring frontline communities, particularly BIPOC, into living-wage green jobs.

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, Executive Office

Related Departments/Programs: Metro, Public Health, DLS, DES, OESJ, DHR, DNRP

King County Role



Implement



Convene

Connections and Considerations



Public Priority



Resource Need



Equitable Climate Future



Community Leadership

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **3.1 Building Partnerships for a Green Jobs Strategy**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Establish interdepartmental green jobs workgroup that includes BIPOC employees in a variety of green jobs and across different seniority levels (including interns) to help inform internal strategies.
- Provide resources and staffing to support the development and implementation of a green jobs strategy that aligns with the SCAP, economic development, and [Investing in You](#) goals through a collaborative and coordinated process with stakeholders and relevant external partners.
- Conduct current state analysis, including collecting quantitative and qualitative data on racial and ethnic diversity (with options for multiracial and Indigenous people), of green jobs across sectors within King County government, including contractors.

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks Interns



“We need a Just Transition when we transition away from fossil fuels. But will those jobs be prioritized for the frontline communities? There are good practices available here that we need to follow - Priority Hire is one of them. It is imperative that pathways are created for our communities to access these jobs. A Just Transition means everyone is brought along in the transition, and in the true sense all communities should be brought along equally and equitably.”

- Debolina B.

3.2 Building Pathways to Green Jobs Across Sectors (External and Internal Workforce Development)

Priority Actions

- SRFC 3.2.1 **Develop an equitable green workforce that is representative of the diversity of King County communities and reflects the diverse skill sets, knowledge systems, and experiences of King County communities through targeted hiring, workforce development, community agreements, and creating intentional pathways for frontline communities across sectors and seniority levels.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, OESJ, Executive Office, DNRP, Metro

Related Departments/Programs: DLS, DES, DHR

King County Role



Implement



Convene

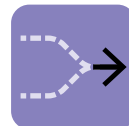
Connections and Considerations



Resource Need



Reduce Emissions



Build Equitable Practices



Equitable Climate Future

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **3.2 Building Pathways to Green Jobs Across Sectors**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Support paid opportunities intentionally targeting underrepresented communities (including BIPOC) such as internships with the Climate Action Team, climate fellowship programs, early career pathway programs, and internal climate-related career development opportunities.
- Promote youth engagement by supporting youth training and climate-related job development programs such as job fairs, presentation, workshops, career days, job shadows, informational interview program, and tours (aligns with [GHG 6.4.2](#)).
- Equip managers with the skills, tools, and resources to support employees from frontline communities, including skills to lead inclusive and diverse cross-cultural teams, fostering a workplace culture of inclusion and belonging, and practicing allyship and accountability (aligns with [ESJ Strategic Plan](#)).

3.3 Working Toward a Just Transition

- SRFC 3.3.1 **Partner with frontline community workers and industries to identify strategies to equitably transition workers to greener jobs, shift to more sustainable practices, and promote green skills development, while prioritizing worker health and economic well-being.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, Executive Office

Related Departments/Programs: Public Health, Metro, LFI, DNRP



Convene



Support/Advocate



Health Blueprint



Resource Need



Climate Prep.



Equitable Climate Future

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **3.3 Working Toward a Just Transition**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Partner to identify and promote trainings, educational materials, and technical assistance around sustainable practices and green skill development.
- Work with partners and Public Health to promote worker safety, particularly for essential workers and those experiencing climate impacts such as farm and food systems workers exposed to extreme heat and/or wildfire smoke.

Focus Area 4 Community Health and Emergency Preparedness

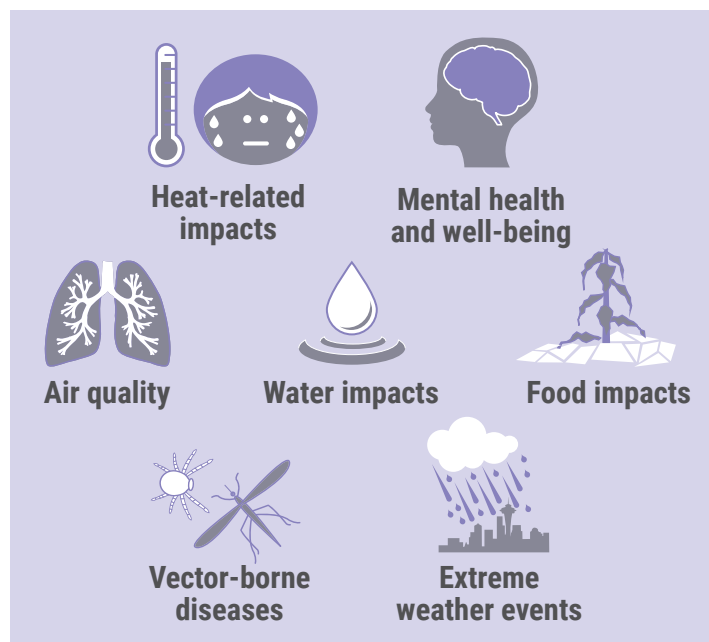


Background and Current State

Public and Environmental Health

Climate change is already impacting the health of communities across Washington.²⁴ Communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities are some of the most vulnerable to climate-related hazards.²⁵ The region is seeing projections for clear increases in frequency of extreme heat events, rising sea levels, declining snowpack, ocean acidification, and more frequent flooding.²⁶ These climate impacts can create conditions that negatively impact public health. Direct impacts, such as respiratory issues from prolonged wildfire smoke, are already being seen. There are also less direct impacts, such as prolonged heat waves and flooding, that reduce agricultural production, which directly impacts outdoor workers through heat-stress and heat-related illness, and increases the price of produce in markets and stores. This makes it harder for low-income families to afford nutritious food items. The region is also seeing climate change creating more obstacles for our frontline communities to live long and healthy lives.²⁷ King County's frontline communities, especially low-income communities, BIPOC communities, and people experiencing homelessness, are the most likely to be impacted and the least likely to have the resources to respond to climate impacts. The inequities in our health and economic well-being have been underscored by the recent COVID-19 crisis.

Health-Related Climate Change Impacts



Although everyone is vulnerable to these health impacts, some communities will face a larger burden because of existing inequities. That burden is influenced by current and historic racial, social, environmental, and economic inequities that will be exacerbated by climate change. Public Health produced the [Blueprint for Addressing Climate Change and Health](#) to confront the intersection of climate change impacts and health. The Blueprint addressed how low-income and communities of color will disproportionately face climate change burdens. These frontline communities have higher rates of asthma, less access to affordable healthy foods, face more barriers to quality healthcare, are more likely to live in flood-prone areas and areas with higher exposure to toxics, and have more difficulty evacuating during emergencies. More recently, in June 2020, Public Health declared that racism is a public health crisis and committed to disrupting and dismantling systemic racism to protect the health and well-being of BIPOC communities.²⁸

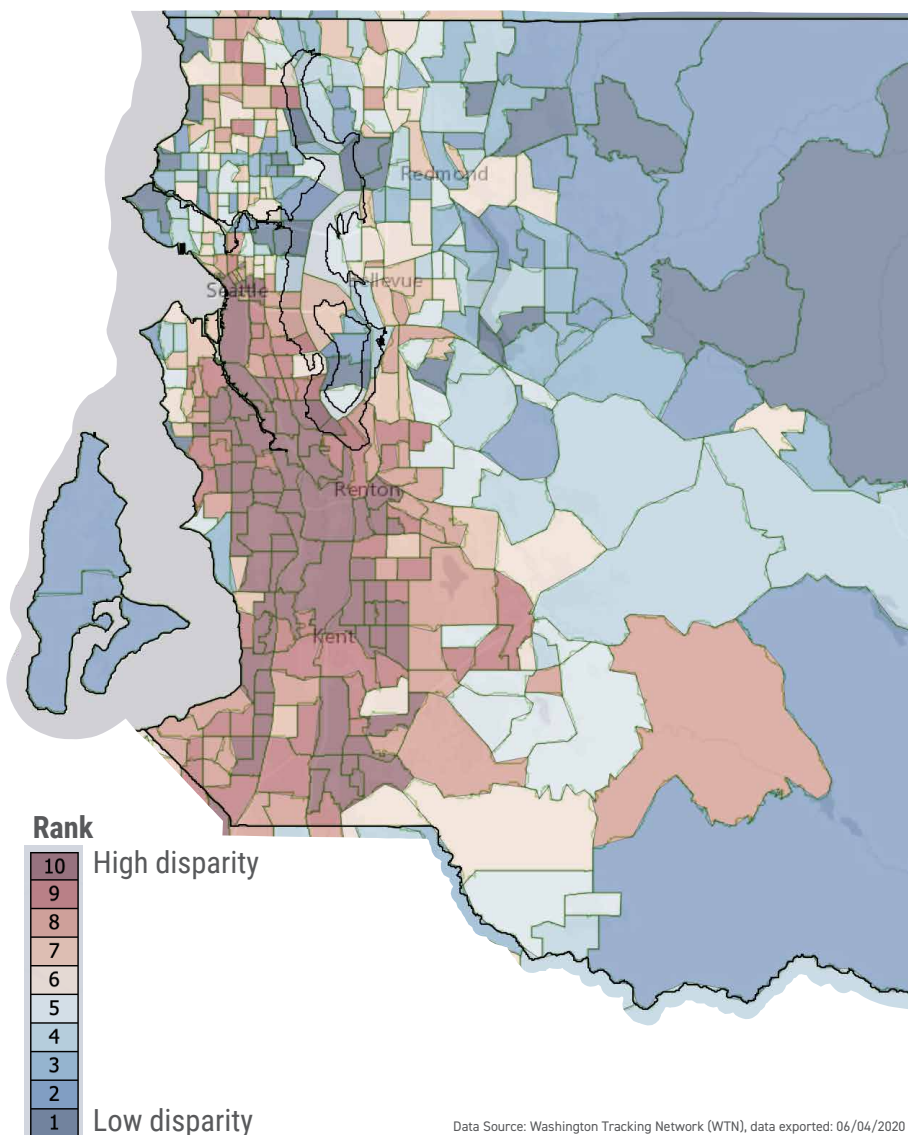
As climate impacts become more severe, the impacts to human health will be more pronounced and disproportionate. Children, older adults, pregnant individuals, those with chronic health conditions, and those experiencing homelessness are also more vulnerable to health impacts associated with climate change.²⁹ These frontline communities are less likely to have the resources to respond to climate impacts which means the negative health impacts they are already facing will only get worse. Communities of color are already 37 percent more likely to experience poor air quality than white populations.³⁰ They are also more likely to live near industrial areas, hazardous waste sites, and landfills, which pollute the air with micro particulate matter (PM2.5) and GHGs.³¹ Breathing in polluted air can cause asthma and exacerbate respiratory issues. Respiratory issues can make individuals more vulnerable to other respiratory diseases, as the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated.

The Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map indicates that communities in south King County, where there is a higher concentration of communities of color, face the greatest health disparities. This Environmental Health Disparities Map aims to capture the cumulative impact of environmental hazards and social conditions on communities and includes data around environmental exposures, environmental effects, socioeconomic factors, and health sensitive populations.³² Furthermore, the Washington State Department of Health has found that Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander individuals have significantly (up to 20 percent) higher rates of death from asthma than non-Hispanic white populations.³³ With an increase in wildfires, there will be prolonged periods of smoke and poor air quality, which will worsen existing respiratory issues that are already seen at higher rates in these frontline communities. Although respiratory issues are not the only concerning health impact, it illustrates how important it is to act now. **Preparing for climate-related public health impacts** and expanding communications and education now will help King County communities, especially frontline communities, be more resilient to climate change.

Changes in exposure to extreme climate- or weather-related events cause and exacerbate stress and mental health disorders, with greater risk for certain populations. Wildfires, heavy rainfall, landslides,

Environmental Health Disparities

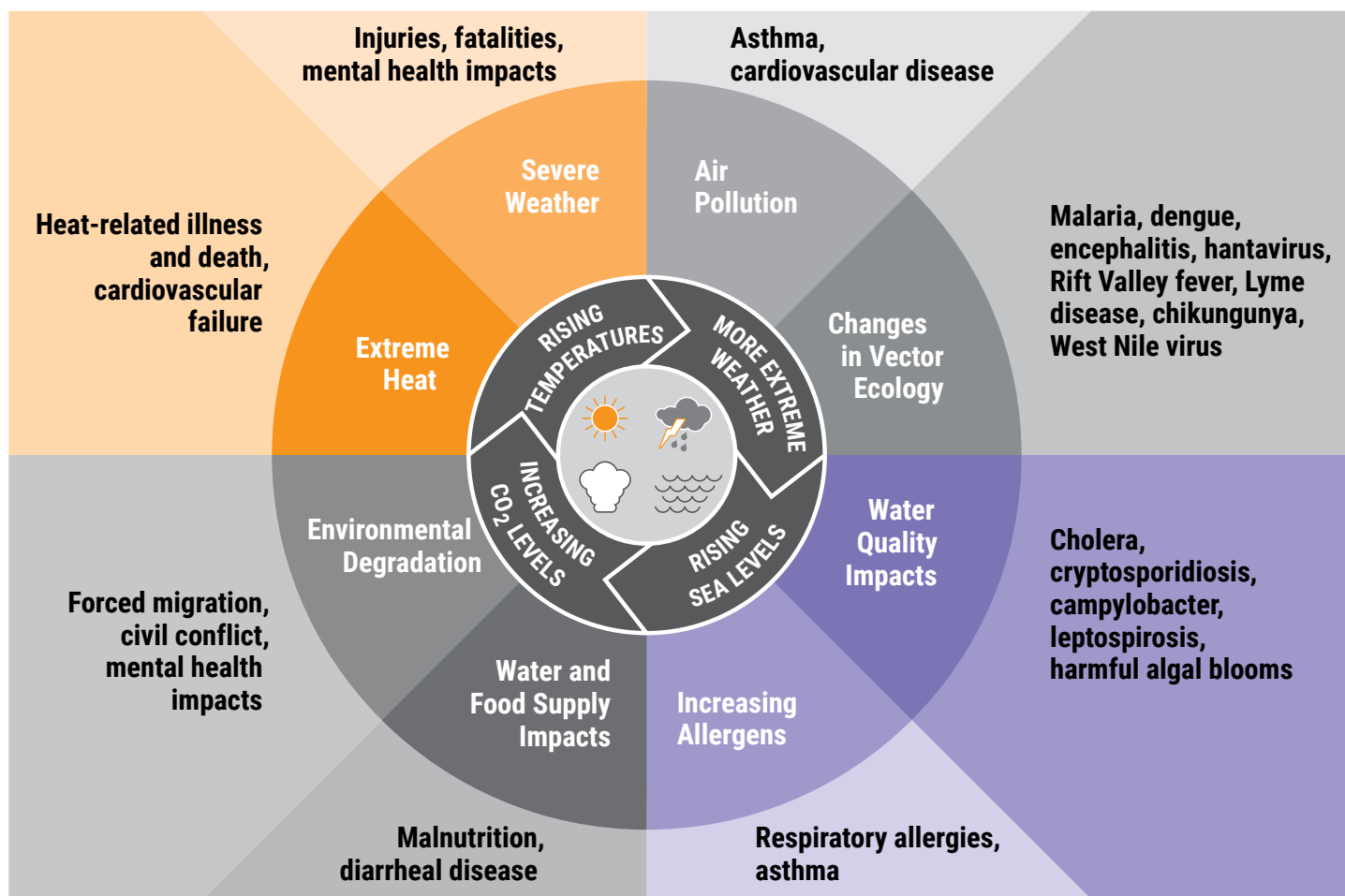
Environmental Exposures, Environmental Effects, Socioeconomic Factors, Sensitive Populations



flooding, and windstorms lead to injury, displacement, and sometimes death, all of which increase stress and anxiety. Some patients with mental illness are especially susceptible to heat. Suicide rates may increase with higher temperatures, dementia is a risk factor for hospitalization and death during heat waves, and certain medications for mental illness interfere with temperature regulation.³⁴ About 30 percent of people who are chronically homeless suffer from mental illness, and they also tend to live in areas that are more susceptible to urban heat island effects, making them vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat.³⁵

Multiple sources of reliable science-based research have identified the climate and health risks that the region and King County are currently facing and those that are projected to be faced in the future. Many aspects of the region’s built environment will be impacted, including stormwater systems, homes, roads, parks, and more.³⁶ Historically, Black communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color have not equitably benefitted from the region’s built environment. For example, most green spaces that act as cooling centers in King County are concentrated in north King County.³⁷ This causes south King County community members to be much more vulnerable to heat events which are exacerbated by existing health disparities. Collecting and coordinating **climate equity data and mapping** that can be used in decision-making processes will be important as King County determines where to invest resources first. These data around climate equity and community health must be identified in partnership with frontline communities to make sure that the data that is collected is accurately capturing what frontline communities are experiencing and is interpreted and used in a way that addresses the unique needs of these communities.

Impact of Climate Change on Human Health



Source: Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects

Emergency Preparedness

With these heightened risks caused by climate impacts, more frequent emergency situations are likely to occur. Frontline communities across King County have faced systemic and historical inequities, the effects of which are still felt today in the inequitable distribution of information and resources across King County.³⁸

The COVID-19 crisis has immensely impacted all King County communities, particularly frontline communities. Historic and existing inequities have led to frontline communities, especially low-income and BIPOC communities, to have pre-existing health conditions, the inability to work from home, lower incomes that cause them to be cost burdened, a lack of access to resources, and a lack of healthy foods close to their homes. Many lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis can be applied while **preparing for climate emergencies** to allow King County communities, especially frontline communities, to be able to respond, recover, and be resilient in the face of emergency events.

"[In the summer of 2018] I had a hard time breathing, and I had to spend a lot of time inside with the windows closed. I was so impacted by this in many ways, and it was challenging because I love to open my windows in the summertime. I saw other people struggling [with the wildfire smoke]. I have friends and family who have asthma. Every summer since this happened, I always think this is going to happen again, that it's going to get worse. I'm anxious and worried that this is the new normal for us! How are people who were struggling to breathe going to deal with these changes?"

- Dinah W.

The framework for action

The CECTF developed a **vision for Community Health and Emergency Preparedness** in an equitable climate future. The vision statements below guided the development of priority actions that identify steps toward reaching climate equity in King County.

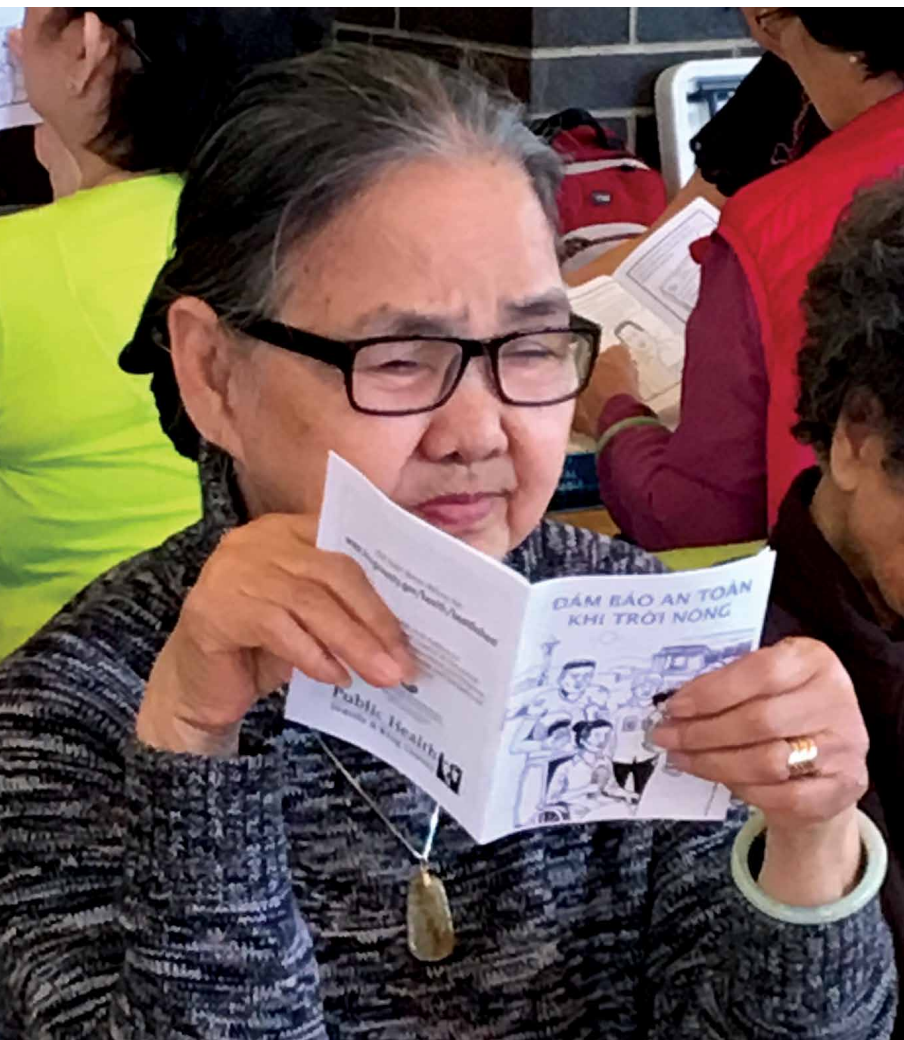
- We envision a future in which race, income, gender, citizenship status, ability, age, sexual orientation, and geographic location are not determinants of health or life expectancy and all frontline communities residents have the resources to be resilient to the health and economic impacts of climate change.
- Frontline communities have culturally-relevant individual and community emergency plans, and are connected to networks, resources, and partnerships that support those plans.
- Frontline communities have the resources and support to respond to extreme weather events and public health emergencies.
- Emergency information is disseminated in multiple languages and through culturally relevant channels and trusted partner networks across King County.

CECTF members presenting climate change and health priorities to the King County Board of Health.



Based on this vision, the following table outlines priority actions in **Expanding Communications and Education, Preparing for Climate-Related Public Health Impacts, Preparing for Climate Emergencies, and Coordinating Climate Equity Data and Mapping**. Each action identifies key and related County departments and programs that support activities toward achieving the action, as well as the role of King County as an implementer, convener, and/or supporter/advocate. Additional connections to other sections of the SCAP and considerations are indicated by SCAP-wide icons. Addressing disproportionate impacts of climate and health equity, especially in frontline communities, is a shared priority with the [Preparing for Climate Change section](#). This work will be coordinated to achieve actions with overlapping objectives and develop joint performance measures.

Community member reading Public Health's stay safe in the heat comic in Vietnamese.



"I think that on top of language access is also making sure that in each community is already prepped to deal with those circumstances so that there is a hub of information coming from the government but the community is already well resourced. Right now, we'll see that if [the government] were to resource and train out smaller CBOs and grassroots organizations to prepare for this [crisis] then [the communities would benefit]. I think there is an opportunity to increase that bandwidth."

- Sameth M.

"We grew up right off the West Seattle freeway by the Nucor steel factory and if you ever drove by that is like plumes of smoke, right in your face, and a lot of traffic. And so again, like I didn't have the words to describe that this is an environmental injustice, but when I found a space that was actively fighting for these things around like healthy housing and, you know, healthy jobs and food. It really resonated with me and I wanted to join that effort."

- Jill M.

"[Our] community members have been impacted with health issues. We had more numbers of people who have asthma or other climate-related diseases. There are some factors that need to be addressed to reduce these numbers."

- Gladis C.

FOCUS AREA 4: COMMUNITY HEALTH AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

4.1 Expanding Communications and Education

Priority Actions

- SRFC 4.1.1 **Create and resource opportunities for frontline communities to co-create communications around climate events and health, access emergency resources and warnings, and collaborate on training materials to prepare communities for emergency events and climate-related health impacts while reducing access and participation barriers.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, Public Health, Metro

Related Departments/Programs: DES (OEM)

King County Role



Implement



Convene

Connections and Considerations



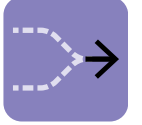
Climate Prep.



Health Blueprint



Language Access



Build Equitable Practices

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **4.1 Expanding Communications and Education**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Collaborate with Public Health and community partners to address gaps in climate and health knowledge and co-develop inclusive and equitable climate and health messaging, resources, and guidance. (Cross-listed action, [Prep 2.1.1](#)). Make materials available in multiple languages, using culturally relevant examples.
- Build awareness for frontline communities around how to access preparedness resources and supplies when they face natural disasters or extreme weather events. Integrate climate change and equity messaging into emergency trainings and messaging.

4.2 Preparing for Climate-Related Public Health Impacts

- SRFC 4.2.1 **Coordinate agencies to make investments and resources available in frontline communities to prepare for, mitigate, and address disparities in climate-related public health impacts using best available data.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: Public Health, DES (OEM), LCI, DNRP



Implement



Convene



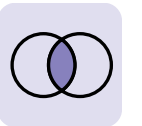
Climate Prep.



Health Blueprint



Reduce Emissions



Aligning Initiatives

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **4.2 Preparing for Climate-Related Public Health Impacts**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Develop coordinated strategies to systematically remedy disparities in open space access and utilization, green space, and tree canopy coverage to address environmental justice concerns (Cross-listed action, [GHG 6.1.3](#)).
- The Climate Action Team will work with internal and external partners to develop and implement coordinated strategies for reducing temperatures and the associated risk of heat-related illness in areas identified as urban heat islands based on heat mapping efforts. (Cross-listed action, [Prep 3.1.1](#))
- Identify ways to reduce susceptibility to adverse health impacts for farm and food systems workers due to climate impacts, such as exposure to extreme heat and smoke from wildfires during peak summer months.

4.3 Preparing for Climate Emergencies

Priority Actions

- SRFC 4.3.1 **Prioritize the identification of strategies, resources, and training opportunities in partnership with frontline communities to ensure residents, communities, and small businesses can effectively respond and recover after a climate and/or public health emergency event.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, DES (OEM)

Related Departments/Programs: Public Health, DLS, OESJ

King County Role



Implement



Support/
Advocate

Connections and Considerations



Climate
Prep.



Health
Blueprint



Language
Access



Solutions for
Root Causes

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **4.3 Preparing for Climate Emergencies**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Partner with Climate Action Team, Public Health, CECTF, and Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to develop training opportunities for frontline community members (in multiple languages) to become educators in their own communities.
- Work with frontline communities, households, and small businesses identify ways to bolster preparedness programs that address security gaps (food, housing, water, medical supplies, transportation, economic security, etc.) during climate-related crises.

4.4 Coordinating Climate Equity Data and Mapping

- SRFC 4.4.1 **Partner with frontline communities to identify, evaluate, prioritize, and disseminate key climate and health indicators and mapping data around climate justice, public health, and emergency preparedness to coordinate decision-making and public awareness.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: Public Health, DES (OEM), DNRP



Implement



Convene



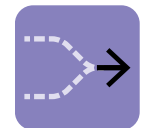
Climate
Prep.



Resource
Need



Health
Blueprint



Build Equitable
Practices

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **4.4. Coordinating Climate Equity Data and Mapping**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Share and accessibly disseminate climate impacts and environmental justice mapping data with the public, especially the County's frontline communities, in accessible formats through trusted community partners.
- Coordinate mapping efforts of environmental justice and climate impacts across agencies and partners including Public Health, OEM, Climate Action Team, and the statewide Environmental Health Disparities Map.
- Decolonize climate data by partnering with frontline communities to inform, identify, evaluate, and prioritize key climate equity and health indicators, in partnership with Public Health and the [Preparing for Climate Change section](#). "Decolonize data" is a term used by many BIPOC communities (but particularly Indigenous communities) to reflect that data should be collected, informed by, and interpreted in collaboration with the communities that data reflects.

Focus Area 5

Food Systems and Food Security



Background and Current State

A major climate vulnerability in the region's food systems is food security—the ability to obtain and use sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food.³⁹ Approximately one out of nine households in Washington is food insecure. In south King County, the number of people who are food insecure is almost double the numbers across Washington with one in five residents being food insecure in south King County.⁴⁰ Low-income households of color, especially African American and Hispanic households, are twice as likely to have trouble getting food on the table, and there is limited data for American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian American households.⁴¹ This disparity will grow as climate change worsens and threatens the region's food supply and security.

Food systems are a foundation of healthy, resilient communities. Since the early 1960s, global per capita food production has increased significantly, mostly due to more intensive land use and vastly greater inputs of fertilizer and other inorganic inputs, which have had well-documented impacts on increasing GHG emissions and reductions in land and water quality.⁴² Although farm output and production is increasing overall, with climate change that production is projected to slow or decline.⁴³ **Growing, gathering, harvesting,** and sharing food are central to some of the most meaningful and vital community experiences and practices, and there are many vulnerabilities in the region's food systems that have the potential to be severely exacerbated by climate change.

Global and local climate change impacts will affect crop yields, available crop varieties, prices, and the nutritional value of food, putting already vulnerable populations at further risk of food insecurity



as well as increased adverse health impacts.⁴⁴ Globally, it is projected that climate change will challenge agricultural systems with heavier rain, flooding, wildfires, and extreme temperatures becoming commonplace.⁴⁵ The majority of food consumed in King County is grown in major food processing centers across the United States and outside the region. Reduced production levels in southern latitudes and increasing transportation costs will likely lead to increased local food prices, especially during seasons where significant local or regional production is not adequate.⁴⁶ For low-income households that are already having a hard time affording groceries, this will only make it harder to afford healthy foods.

Healthy ecosystems are the foundation of a climate-resilient food system in King County. Locally, climate projections indicate that King County farmers will need to adapt to heavier winter rains and more flooding, which may be a significant problem during the spring and fall “shoulder seasons,” and hotter, drier summers during the peak production season. Higher temperatures during the peak growing season will increase demand for already scarce irrigation water and further complicate the challenge of balancing the needs of farming with goals to restore salmon, orca, and other species of concern. Salmon is a vulnerable species that has been integral to the economies, food supply, and ecosystem health of communities in this region—from Tribes managing salmon runs throughout the region to immigrants and refugees fishing in the Duwamish River. Climate change is already impacting water temperatures and habitats salmon rely on. Increasing summer temperatures also has implications for farmer/farmworker well-being and the ability to work and harvest fields effectively.

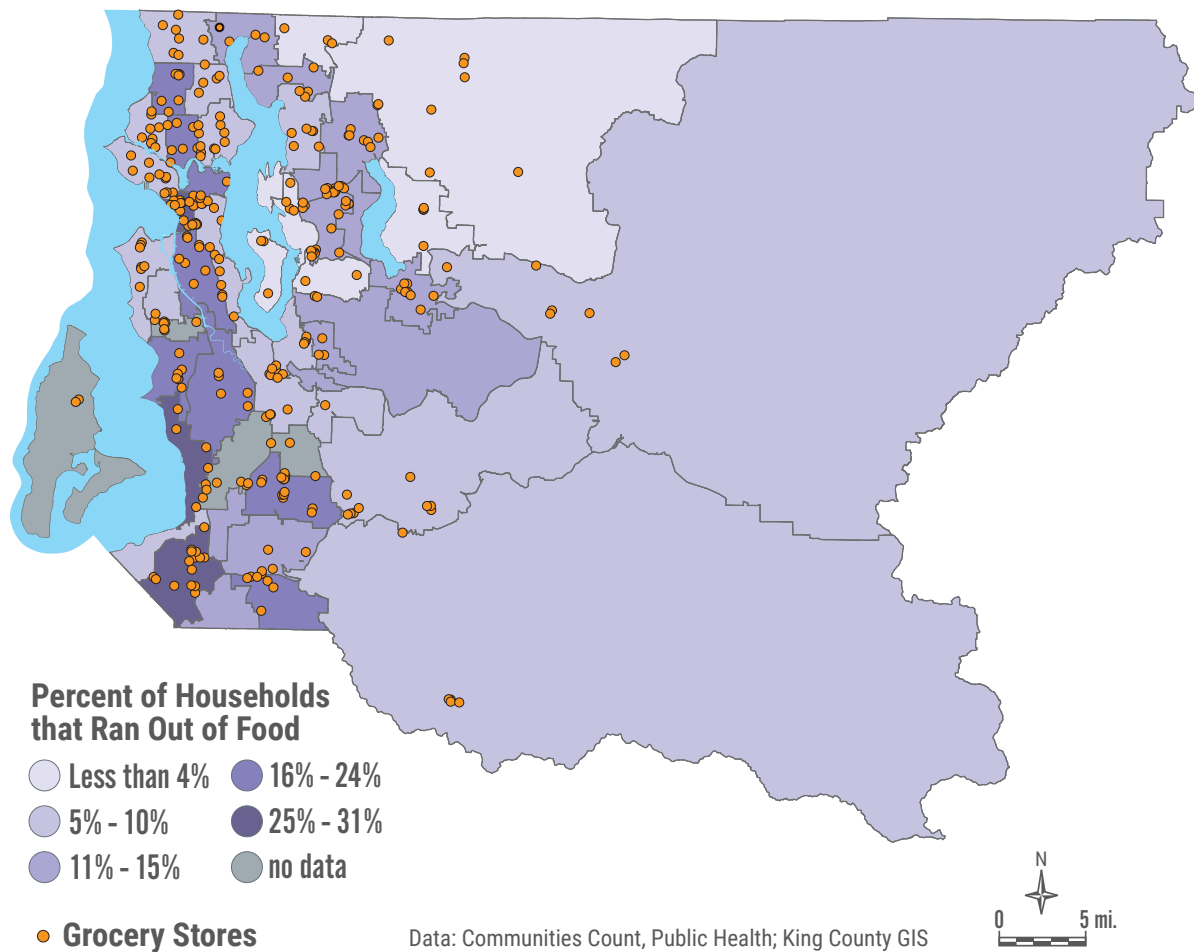
“Healthy lands and waters are the foundation of a climate-resilient food system. Climate change is impacting the places our foods come from, which impacts the health of the communities who depend on them- from Tribes stewarding salmon runs to immigrant and refugee communities fishing the Duwamish. The huckleberry meadows, camas prairies, and intertidal harvesting zones are here because Native people have always taken care of them, or as Billy Frank Jr. would say ‘all of Western Washington was once a food forest.’ Following the guidance of Tribal communities who know these landscapes, and also learning from land-based knowledges of other frontline communities, is necessary for protecting the lands, waters and foods that live in them.”

- Brett R.

United Territories of Pacific Islanders Alliance (U.T.O.P.I.A.) Seattle organizing food donations for families experiencing food insecurity during the COVID-19 crisis.



Households that ran out of food, King County (2010, 2011, 2013)



Food insecure households and those in the food security gap are those who will be most impacted, as well as those who live in areas experiencing food insecurity (known as “food deserts”). The majority of areas in King County experiencing food hardship and have a lack of accessible grocery stores are located in south King County, as depicted in this map.^{47 48} Due to historic redlining, racial covenants, and marginalization, the majority of people who live in these areas are largely low-income people of color.⁴⁹ As prices for food increase, the number of households that will be food insecure is likely to rise. This means that more families will continue to choose cheap, energy-dense food over nutritiously dense food; skip meals; or forego other necessities, such as heating, to afford food. These actions will increase the risk of malnutrition, obesity, cardiovascular disease, higher blood pressure, and more.

King County’s Local Food Initiative, which was launched in 2014, works to strengthen the region’s local food economy and prioritizes **expanding affordability and accessibility** of healthy foods. As the county works to address climate change and begin shifting to a more regenerative economy, **supporting a just food economy** will be critical to making this transition equitable.

“Our food systems are at risk with the changing climate. There’s already famines happening in other places in the world, and even here in the U.S., like droughts and difficulty even growing food and the big agricultural industry is not sustainable. We really do need to become more self-sustaining and prepare for the time when food will be more difficult [to access] and I think that having a local food system will actually set us up for sustainability in the future.”

- Jill M.

The framework for action

The CECTF developed a vision for Food Systems and Food Security in an equitable climate future. The vision statements below guided the development of priority actions that identify steps toward reaching climate equity in King County.

- Frontline communities have access to healthy, culturally relevant, and affordable food.
- King County residents, especially frontline communities, have opportunities to become food producers, including access to urban and rural farmland/harvesting grounds, increased agriculture training and education, and technical support for these activities.
- The King County food system sustains the health of the ecosystems that support food production, including surrounding lands and waters.
- The King County food system supports the well-being of the people who produce, distribute, prepare, and serve the region's food.
- King County's food systems acknowledge and support Tribal interests in cultural and natural resources found in the food-producing regions of the County.

"A lot of the things that our communities have already been asking for like access to healthy food, good transportation, living wage jobs, and affordable housing - all of these basic needs that communities have been advocating for decades are also climate resilience strategies and also carbon emissions reductions strategies. When we're meeting people's basic needs and when we're planning for people to be healthy and helping them become climate resilient, we can actually help to reduce carbon emissions too."

- Katrina P.

Based on this vision, the following table outlines priority actions in **Expanding Affordability and Accessibility, Growing, Gathering, and Harvesting**, and **Supporting a Just Food Economy**. Each action identifies key and related county departments and programs that support activities toward achieving the action, as well as the role of King County as an implementer, convener, and/or supporter/advocate. Additional connections to other sections of the SCAP and considerations are indicated by SCAP-wide icons.






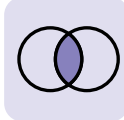



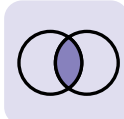
A farmer watering the land next to the compost station at the Living Well Kent greenhouse in Auburn. The goal of Waste 4 Purpose (W4P) is to raise the rates of composting among the African and Middle Eastern Immigrant and refugee community in South King County.



Mother Africa and Living Well Kent

FOCUS AREA 5: FOOD SYSTEMS AND FOOD SECURITY

5.1 Expanding Affordability and Accessibility

Priority Actions	King County Role	Connections and Considerations
SRFC 5.1.1 Advocate for the expansion of nutrition incentive programs and other support mechanisms for low-income and frontline community members who could be disproportionately impacted by climate-influenced food insecurity to afford fresh, healthy, culturally relevant, and accessible produce while supporting local and BIPOC growers, where possible. <i>Key Departments/Programs: DNRP, LFI, Public Health</i> <i>Related Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team</i>	 Convene  Support/Advocate	 Public Priority  Reduce Emissions  Solutions for Root Causes  Aligning Initiatives
SRFC 5.1.2 Explore and support the development of programs focused on the production and distribution of affordable and healthy foods to communities that live in areas experiencing food insecurity and have low accessibility to public transit, people with disabilities and/or who have health disparities, and people who are disproportionately impacted by climate change. <i>Key Departments/Programs: DNRP, LFI, Public Health</i> <i>Related Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team</i>	 Convene  Support/Advocate	 Solutions for Root Causes  Aligning Initiatives

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **5.1 Expanding Affordability and Accessibility**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Support development of nutrition incentive programs across the County by facilitating knowledge management between assistance programs and local jurisdictions that do not have these programs.
- Partner with food incentive programs, food providers, and relevant stakeholders to develop and expand food assistance and/or incentive programs to address unmet needs, including sharing lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis around emergency food access.
- Advocate for the sustainability and expansion of nutrition incentive programs (such as FreshBucks) to cover the food security gap and secure ongoing funding for the program (in alignment with the Local Food Initiative, [GHG 6.2.1](#)).

"I am an immigrant myself from Kenya. I have lived here for over 40 years. I am able to identify immigrant and refugee challenges and needs they may have as well as create a safe place they can work from. There is a lot of excitement now with people aspiring to be farmers, many of them have been part of a lot of activities like farm tours and food summits. People are searching for land, there is excitement and anxiety because they are unsure how long it will take to do what they need to do. Because of this, people are becoming more aware of the system and resources from King County and believe something good can happen."

– Njambi G.

5.2 Growing, Gathering, and Harvesting

Priority Actions

SRFC 5.2.1 **Coordinate across ecosystem health, land access, and food systems programs to expand frontline community capacity and access to healthy lands and waters in which to grow, gather, and/or harvest culturally significant plants, foods, and natural resources in a changing climate.**

Key Departments/Programs: DNRP, LFI, LCI

Related Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, DNRP, Public Health, CWHH

King County Role



Convene

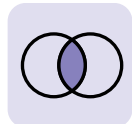


Support/
Advocate

Connections and Considerations



Reduce
Emissions



Aligning
Initiatives



Equitable
Climate Future

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **5.2 Growing, Gathering, and Harvesting** identified by the CECTF and KC staff:

- Support the growth of socially disadvantaged food growers, especially immigrant and refugee farmers, by connecting them to opportunities including land access, education, outreach, technical training, and free to low cost inputs (Cross-listed action, [GHG 6.2.2](#)).
- Develop communications materials, in multiple languages, on the connections between food, climate change, and food justice.
- Coordinate across ecosystem health programs (CWHH, Open Space Equity Cabinet, 30-Year Forest Plan) to support water quality, open space access, and sustainable agriculture, gathering, and fishing practices.



5.3 Supporting a Just Food Economy

Priority Actions

SRFC 5.3.1 **Partner with frontline communities to support a regenerative and sustainable local zero waste food economy that prioritizes the physical and economic vitality of communities, health of food ecosystems, and well-being of food/farmworkers.**

Key Departments/Programs: DNRP, LFI

Related Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, Public Health, DLS, CWHH, DES

King County Role



Convene



Support/
Advocate

Connections and Considerations



Reduce
Emissions



Health
Blueprint



Solutions for
Root Causes



Equitable
Climate Future

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **5.3 Supporting a Just Food Economy** identified by the CECTF and KC staff:

- Support the development of the community-led food justice coalition in partnership with Public Health and LFI
- Identify ways to reduce susceptibility to adverse health impacts for farm and food systems workers due to climate impacts, such as exposure to extreme heat and smoke from wildfires.
- Develop a Good Food purchasing policy or guidelines that prioritizes and supports local, sustainable, small business and WMBE (women, minority owned businesses and entrepreneurship) food vendors to purchase from for County led and sponsored events.
- Develop a circular economy framework and deliver a zero waste of resources plan that identifies opportunities to support community food banks, community-based compost initiatives, and community-owned food businesses. (Cross-listed, [GHG 5.1.1](#) & [GHG 5.2.1](#))

King County 2019 SCAP Public Workshops.



Focus Area 6 Housing Security and Anti-Displacement



Background and Current State

Climate change is beginning to influence where and how people live as they experience climate impacts and as cities, neighborhoods, and infrastructure are designed to be more sustainable. The impacts of and the ways that people adapt to and mitigate climate change have implications on their housing stock, affordability, and risk of displacement. As articulated in the Climate Change and Displacement in U.S. Communities report by EcoAdapt, “Climate change and economic disparity lay bare the legacy of intentional, racially discriminatory systems that disproportionately hurt low-income and communities of color. What often happens is that the very solutions that curb emissions and protect from these impacts can also cause displacement.”⁵⁰ More U.S. households are headed by renters than at any point since 1965—many of them People of Color or low-income with job insecurity—in the face of a pandemic this creates a potential displacement emergency.⁵¹

Affordable housing is a top concern for many frontline communities, including CECTF members, and there is a strong recognition that climate change is likely to have a significant impact on their communities. Some climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, such as investing in green infrastructure, may unintentionally contribute to higher housing costs. As the region experiences further climate impacts, King County must

“A major issue that has risen to the top is around displacement that happens before, during, and after climate disasters. People can’t be resilient unless they have a stable place to live and a strong social safety net. And when people are being displaced, they lose that and they are also at more risk when they don’t have shelter or those strong bonds.”

- Jill M.



support affordable housing and anti-displacement policies in conjunction with other climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Population growth and housing prices have been steadily increasing across the country, forcing frontline communities, especially low-income communities, to move to places further from their places of work, roots, and community to areas that are underserved by public transit. As climate impacts are felt, households with fewer resources will become cost-burdened as housing costs, including utilities, continue to increase. These households will find it more challenging to afford to keep their homes resilient in the face of increased heat waves, extreme weather events, wildfire smoke, and other climate impacts. Low-income households will also become more vulnerable to displacement away from urban centers. This, in turn, increases their vulnerability in the case of a climate emergency as they lose their social networks with shared language, local community gathering spaces, and access to public transit.⁵²

Historically, structural racism in the form of racially restrictive covenants, redlining, blockbusting, and other public and private practices have shaped where BIPOC communities live in King County.⁵³ It is evident that current and historic racial injustice, housing discrimination, and inequitable neighborhood investment contribute to cascading disparities for BIPOC communities, including in access to economic opportunities, health, wealth, and education. Many of these communities have the region’s lowest household incomes, the greatest health needs, and have historically lacked public infrastructure investments—making them more vulnerable to climate change impacts.⁵⁴

The countywide affordable housing crisis has further exacerbated the inequities caused by historic systemic racism. In 2018, the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development defined Area Median Income (AMI) for a family of four in King and Snohomish counties as earning an annual income of \$103,400. A family of four earning 80 percent AMI has an annual income of \$82,720 and could pay monthly housing costs of \$2,068 without being cost burdened. However, at \$2,432 per month, the average rent in King County exceeded the affordable rent.⁵⁵



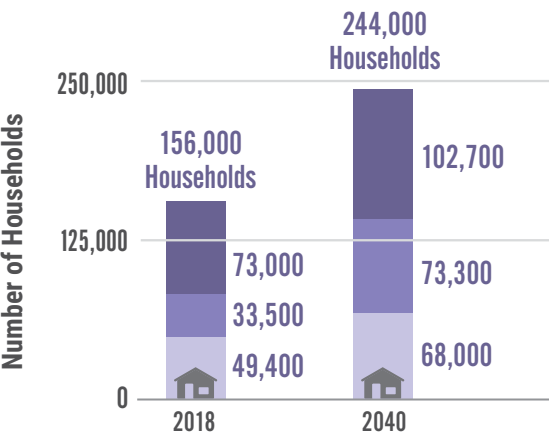
King County Internal SRFC Advisory Committee creating a vision for an equitable climate future.

“I think that housing is crucial because it’s the pillar upon which a lot of other needs are addressed and met and if people don’t have a safe place to live and have a roof over their head, it’s a lot harder to have good health, support your family, and have a job. This is a climate issue in the sense that if we’re not able to stay rooted in place, have access to public transit, and have good jobs, then it’s not only bad for the planet but it’s also bad for people. ”

- Katrina P.

COST BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS IN KING COUNTY

- 0-30% Area Median Income
- 31-50% Area Median Income
- 51-80% Area Median Income



Data: King County Regional Affordable Housing Report

As the [King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force](#) found, this crisis has not affected all households evenly. Low- and moderate-income households have been disproportionately affected, with 124,000 households in King County being cost burdened. Communities of color and renters are disproportionately likely to be severely cost burdened, paying more than half of their income toward housing costs. Of black households, 56 percent are severely cost burdened, while 35 percent of white households are severely cost burdened.

King County's population has grown faster than the development of new homes. Between 2013 and 2017, King County's population grew by an average of 31,800 people or 13,000 households per year, assuming 2.45 people per household. Over that same time, only 10,100 new housing units were added on average each year. Additionally, King County's population has not grown evenly across the income spectrum. Sixty percent of the new households in King County between 2006 and 2016 earned \$125,000 or more per year.⁵⁶ More frequent extreme weather and climate events can damage and destroy housing stock, which can drive up homelessness, especially among frontline communities.⁵⁷

This combination of rising housing prices, high population growth, and most of the growth being made up by those with high incomes has created a housing security issue across King County. For households whose budgets are already strained paying for basic needs, climate change impacts can exacerbate concerns around affordability, household resilience, and their sense of stability. As extreme weather events grow in intensity and frequency, the already cost-strained families may be unable to afford to prepare or respond effectively to these climate events.⁵⁸ And, as frontline communities are forced to relocate because of rising housing prices and associated property taxes, their vulnerability during climate emergencies increases.

Residential displacement makes households less resilient to climate impacts. When families are displaced from their communities, they lose their local social network and may have less access to information in necessary languages in their new neighborhoods. They also have less connections to their local cultural anchors, including the places they work, play, and worship and to schools, where emergency resources might be available. Community cohesion is an important aspect of climate resiliency because having a strong network near your home can be integral to surviving and thriving during and after a climate event.⁵⁹ **Expanding capacity around climate and housing** can help King County communities, especially frontline communities and decision-makers, understand the connections and identify strategies to address barriers frontline communities face around safe, affordable, and climate-resilient housing.



Alignment with the King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force Five-Year Action Plan

These goal areas from the [Regional Affordable Housing Task Force Report](#) align with the CECTF Vision statements.

King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force

Increase construction and preservation of affordable homes for households earning less than 50% area median income

2

Prioritize affordability accessible within a half mile walkshed of existing and planned frequent transit service, with a particular priority for high-capacity transit stations

3

Preserve access to affordable homes for renters by supporting tenant protections to increase housing stability and reduce risk of homelessness

4

Protect existing communities of color and low-income communities from displacement in gentrifying communities.

5



Residential displacement also increases the climate impact of low-income households. Frontline communities, especially low-income communities, rely heavily on public transportation. As rising housing prices force households to move further away from urban centers, their transportation costs go up because they have less access to public transit. This leads to an increase in these displaced households' relative carbon emissions because they are forced to shift to less sustainable practices, such as driving a vehicle to get to their place of work instead of using public transportation or living in homes that are less energy efficient. Therefore, it is important that King County considers **housing vulnerability, climate impacts, and anti-displacement** strategies together in order to best serve its frontline communities.

The [King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force](#) and its successor, the Affordable Housing Committee, have been working to address the housing affordability crisis occurring in King County. The task force's work culminated in a five-year plan to address housing affordability across the County that was released in December 2018. The overarching goal of the plan is to "strive to eliminate cost burden for households earning 80 percent AMI and below, with a priority for serving households at or below 50 percent AMI."⁶⁰

"Increased movement from larger cities to (remote) areas has increased our community's needs for interpretation to access proper health care. When one moves farther from large cities the services provided for refugees and immigrants, who are limited in English speakers, diminish. Even just moving from King County to Pierce County is a huge challenge due to resource availability and accessibility."

- Risho S.

The framework for action

The CECTF developed a **vision for Housing Security and Anti-Displacement** in an equitable climate future. The vision statements below guided the development of priority actions that identify steps toward reaching climate equity in King County.

- Climate change does not disproportionately impact frontline communities' ability to live and thrive in a safe, healthy, and stable environment.
- Frontline communities have increased housing stability, including through expanded and alternative homeownership strategies, and maintain a sense of place and community as climate impacts are experienced.
- Race and income in King County are not predictors of the severity of how climate impacts and repercussions are experienced by frontline communities.





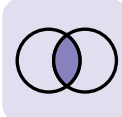

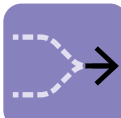




CECTF Members discussing strategies and actions.

- Frontline community members understand climate change, planning, land use, and development, and have access to decision- and policy-making in local government.
- Climate change preparedness, mobility and open space investments, and new amenities do not catalyze resident and business displacement in frontline communities.

Based on this vision, the following table outlines priority actions in **Expanding Capacity around Climate and Housing, and Housing Vulnerability, Climate Impacts, and Anti-Displacement**. Each action identifies key and related county departments and programs that support activities toward achieving the action, as well as the role of King County as an implementer, convener, and/or supporter/advocate. Additional connections to other sections of the SCAP and considerations are indicated by SCAP-wide icons.

FOCUS AREA 6: HOUSING SECURITY AND ANTI-DISPLACEMENT

6.1 Expanding Capacity around Climate and Housing

Priority Actions	King County Role	Connections and Considerations
SRFC 6.1.1 Expand capacity, knowledge, and resources for frontline communities to articulate the connections between housing and climate change through accessible workshops, trainings, informational resources, and/or partnerships. <i>Key Departments/Programs: DCHS, Climate Action Team</i> <i>Related Departments/Programs: Public Health, DLS, DNRP, Metro</i>	 Convene  Support/ Advocate	 Aligning Initiatives  Community Leadership  Build Equitable Practices
SRFC 6.1.2 Address housing insecurities that are exacerbated by climate change by expanding access to affordable housing resources, homeownership strategies, eviction prevention, equitable development, utility assistance programs, and climate-related home improvements. <i>Key Departments/Programs: DCHS, Climate Action Team</i> <i>Related Departments/Programs: Public Health, DLS, DNRP</i>	 Convene  Support/ Advocate	 Solutions for Root Causes  Equitable Climate Future

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **6.1 Expanding Capacity around Climate and Housing**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Integrate climate equity and sustainability with resources and information around affordable housing, eviction prevention, utility assistance programs, and climate resilient home improvements with frontline communities.
- Support King County Affordable Housing Committee equitable development goals around pathways to homeownership and increasing housing stability, specifically for renters, low-income communities, and communities of color.
- Partner with DCHS and Public Health Learning Communities to support land use planning, development, and zoning workshops for community members to build capacity to influence policy decisions.

6.2 Housing Vulnerability, Climate Impacts, and Anti-Displacement

Priority Actions

King County Role

Connections and Considerations

SRFC 6.2.1 **Integrate climate change considerations into affordable housing policies and programs, strategic plans, and mapping practices that impact decision-making.**

Key Departments/Programs: DCHS, Climate Action Team, DNRP, Metro

Related Departments/Programs: DLS



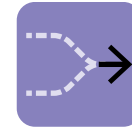
Implement



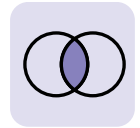
Public Priority



Reduce Emissions



Build Equitable Practices



Aligning Initiatives

SRFC 6.2.2 **Identify community-centered anti-displacement strategies and resources that support climate-resilient infrastructure, reduced housing vulnerability, and economic resilience of frontline community members and small businesses.**

Key Departments/Programs: DCHS, Climate Action Team, DNRP

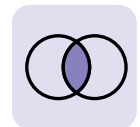
Related Departments/Programs: DLS, Metro



Convene



Climate Prep.



Aligning Initiatives



Support/
Advocate



Solutions for
Root Causes



Equitable
Climate Future

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **6.2 Housing Vulnerability, Climate Impacts, and Anti-Displacement** identified by the CECTF and KC staff:

- Partner with DCHS Equitable Development Manager, affordable housing developers, King County Metro, DLS, and anti-displacement organizations to promote and incentivize affordable housing near transit and explore ways to prevent frontline community and small businesses from displacement (aligns with [GHG 4.6.2](#)).
- Partner with the GreenTools Program to collaborate on a workshop with partners to explore policies that can help to remove barriers to green affordable housing development (aligns with [GHG 4.4.1](#)).
- Explore displacement mitigation and relocation resources for displaced community members for those experiencing extreme weather events, as well as those moved for preparedness planning (i.e., floodplains).

“We need to be able to stay rooted in place in order to be resilient against all these climate impacts.”

– Vera H.

Focus Area 7

Energy Justice and Utilities



Background and Current State

Energy prices have been rising steadily. For low-income communities of color, especially in south King County, this has resulted in many households having to cut down on other necessities to afford their energy bill. Research done by Puget Sound Sage in 2020 found that when energy bills increase by \$50/month, survey respondents report cutting costs by not heating or cooling their home, unplugging appliances, or cutting basic necessities like rent or mortgage payments, food, medicine, childcare, or eldercare.⁶¹

The major climate-related hazards that threaten utility and housing costs are heat, wildfires, flooding, and sea level rise. For example, heat events will cause increased energy demand in summer, leading to spikes in energy prices, and reduced snowpack can decrease hydropower generation. The more frequent and extreme weather events that come with climate change, like wildfires and drought, could also mean increased costs for electricity users. These climate events can also cause damage to transmission/distributional systems and homes, causing power outages.⁶² A majority of King County communities are served by Seattle City Light or Puget Sound Energy. These companies have low-income energy assistance programs, but many low-income households are not actually receiving that assistance. Based on the research done by Puget Sound Sage, only 33 percent of eligible households outside of Seattle receive low-income energy bill assistance, whereas 72 percent of eligible households within Seattle receive bill assistance. Approximately 83 percent of the survey respondents reported not knowing that low-income energy assistance programs exist or believing that they do not qualify.⁶³ Many of these community members face barriers in applying for energy assistance if English is their second language or they do not speak English at all. It is important that energy assistance is accessible, especially to those who already qualify, to support **reducing energy burden on frontline communities**. As climate impacts are experienced, the cost burden of other basic needs will increase, so it is even more critical that this energy assistance reaches all communities that need it. An equitable transition to more renewable energy requires that these vulnerable households thrive and not just survive.



"In our community-based research [on energy], with a sample size of 352, one of the conclusions was that before we try and advance renewable energy programs and policies we actually need to fix our low-income energy assistance programs. And so one of the concerns that our communities have is that energy bills and prices are going to increase. What we've found is that when energy bills and prices increase in our communities, people have to cut basic needs to pay for a bill that's \$50 higher than normal. They unplug appliances like the refrigerators and their food will go bad. They will cut basic needs like food and grocery runs, health care visits, child care, medicine, rent, mortgage - so people are cutting their basic needs in order to pay for high energy."

- Katrina P.

Some climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, such as requiring home energy transitions to more renewable sources, can create significant burdens on frontline communities. Community members who might be interested in making a home more energy efficient can face barriers around cost, access to resources, and/or a lack of accessible information around energy options in their community and benefits of transitioning to more renewable energy sources.⁶⁴ Many of King County's frontline communities are supportive of and interested in transitioning to more renewable energy sources but face barriers in making these changes in their own homes or communities. King County needs to find ways to support expanding **renewable energy and energy efficiency in frontline communities**.

Based on their research, Puget Sound Sage recommends that utility companies and governments meet the need for low-income energy assistance—including bill assistance, weatherization, and energy-efficiency upgrades—if they wish to meet their goals of equitably transitioning to renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions.⁶⁵ **Integrating frontline community expertise in energy policy and decision-making** will be critical to ensuring there is not a disproportionate burden on frontline communities as energy companies transition to producing more renewable energy. As the county transitions to using more renewable energy sources, involving frontline communities will be critical to avoiding unintended consequences for ecosystem health and cultural loss, such as the concerns from some Native communities around the impacts of hydropower on salmon and cultural resources.



Throughout the SRFC section development process, CECTF member Debolina Banerjee's (far left) organization, Puget Sound Sage, was also working on a community-based research project on clean energy and communities of color.

The framework for action

The CECTF developed a **vision for Energy Justice and Utilities** in an equitable climate future. The vision statements below guided the development of priority actions that identify steps toward reaching climate equity in King County.

- Frontline communities are educated on energy sources and alternatives and can accessibly and affordably transition to sustainable energy sources.
- Frontline community members (including renters) do not become financially insecure as utility and energy costs increase.
- Residents (both renters and homeowners) are able to access resources for energy efficiency that provides comfortable living environments, is affordable, and provides resilience against utility price shocks and general increases.

Based on this vision, the following table outlines priority actions in **Reducing Energy Burden on Frontline Communities, Expanding Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Frontline Communities, and Integrating Frontline Community Expertise in Energy Policy and Decision-Making**. Each action identifies key and related county departments and programs that support activities toward achieving the action, as well as the role of King County as an implementer, convener, and/or supporter/advocate. Additional connections to other sections of the SCAP and considerations are indicated by SCAP-wide icons.

FOCUS AREA 7: ENERGY JUSTICE AND UTILITIES

7.1 Reducing Energy Burden on Frontline Communities

Priority Actions

SRFC 7.1.1 Partner with utilities and frontline communities to expand utility assistance and incentive programs to increase affordability and accessibility for frontline communities (especially low-income households) and develop new programs to fill gaps not met by existing programs.

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: DCHS, Metro, DNRP

King County Role



Convene



Support/
Advocate

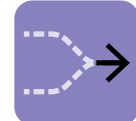
Connections and Considerations



Public
Priority



Solutions for
Root Causes



Build Equitable
Practices

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **7.1 Reducing Energy Burden on Frontline Communities**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Partner with utilities, government agencies, and frontline communities to strengthen and expand existing energy-efficiency programs, utility assistance programs, and incentive programs, including addressing low enrollment, barriers to access, and income qualification.
- Identify strategies to address the needs of lower income households in the energy burden gap that do not benefit from existing utility assistance and/or incentive programs due to factors such as strict income restrictions and/or immigration documentation barriers.

7.2 Expanding Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Frontline Communities

SRFC 7.2.1 Partner with frontline communities to build energy literacy and capacity and support projects that help frontline communities affordably transition to and/or own renewable energy infrastructure and energy-efficient technology.

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: DCHS, DNRP



Convene



Support/
Advocate



Reduce
Emissions



Equitable
Climate Future



Public
Priority



Language
Access

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **7.2 Expanding Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Frontline Communities**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Identify opportunities to support programs that increase access to renewable energy for frontline communities including community solar, state-wide solar incentive programs for low-income households, and a renewable energy resource hub.
- Partner with utilities, key stakeholders, and community organizations to support frontline communities in affordably transitioning to and/or owning renewable energy infrastructure, particularly distributed renewable energy generation systems.
- Create and translate climate and energy informational sheets around energy efficiency, community-scale renewable energy projects, and utility assistance for frontline communities.

7.3 Integrating Frontline Community Expertise into Energy Policy and Decision-Making

Priority Actions

- SRFC 7.3.1 Advocate for frontline community participation in energy policy, decision-making, and regulatory tables (including outside of King County’s jurisdiction), and model frontline community participation within King County’s own energy programs and policies.**

Key Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team

Related Departments/Programs: Executive Office

King County Role



Convene



Support/
Advocate

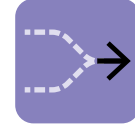
Connections and Considerations



Community
Leadership



Solutions for
Root Causes



Build Equitable
Practices

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **7.3 Integrating Frontline Community Expertise into Energy Policy and Decision-Making**, as collaboratively identified by the CECTF and King County staff:

- Advocate for frontline community participation in energy policy, including the opportunity to testify/comment before, and/or sit on local and state policy and regulatory bodies, such as the Utilities and Transportation Commission, state legislature, Tribal nations, federal policy-making bodies, and so on.
- Partner with Puget Sound Sage, utilities, frontline communities, and key decision-makers to advance community-driven energy policy recommendations from the Puget Sound Sage Report, Powering Transition: Community Priorities for a Renewable & Equitable Future, and Ideation Lab.
- Require equity assessments and highlight community success stories that lead to energy efficiency improvements and policies which ensure that frontline communities benefit from clean energy and energy efficiency programs.



“Energy justice is more than assistance programs. In an energy dependent world like ours, energy should be a basic human right, just as housing is. It is also about the life cycle cost of energy from a justice point of view. Energy sources also need to be examined for environmental justice impacts. Energy sources continue to have huge impacts on indigenous lands and create disparities. These inequities extend beyond the jurisdictions of administrations.”

– Debolina B.

Focus Area 8

Transportation Access and Equity



Background and Current State

Population growth and rising housing prices are forcing low-income communities and communities of color to move to places further from their places of work, roots, and community to areas that are underserved by public transit. Frontline communities, especially low-income communities, rely heavily on public transportation and, as they are forced to move further away from urban centers due to rising housing prices, their transportation costs increase because they have less access to frequent and reliable public transit. Consequently, community members are spending a larger portion of their income on transportation, which takes away from their ability to spend their income on other basic needs. This also leads to an increase in these displaced households' relative carbon emissions because they are forced to shift to less sustainable practices, such as purchasing and driving a vehicle, to get to their place of work instead of using public transportation.

Transportation contributes 36 percent of the GHG emissions in King County.⁶⁶ These emissions contribute to global emissions that are accelerating climate change. In King County, community members experience negative health impacts from decreased air quality caused by these transportation emissions.⁶⁷ As community members are displaced further from their work, congestion on roads and highways increases, further impacting air quality and the health of King County community members. As public transportation is expanded across the County to improve transit access and meet GHG reduction goals, it is important that transit development agencies are **prioritizing community-driven transit development** and creating **climate resilient transit infrastructure**.

Furthermore, communities that heavily rely on public transportation often are not able to access it close to their homes, especially as they move further from urban centers. [King County Metro's 2017 Strategic Plan Progress Report](#) found that only 64 percent of the King County population lives within a quarter mile of a bus stop and that only 50 percent of households are within a half mile walk to a transit stop with frequent service.⁶⁸ The map of transit



"I was kind of shocked to move to White Center and actually not have a bus near my house. The transportation system needs to be flexible to have connectivity to like places like the hospital or going to a clinic going to get services. The infrastructure is focused on the nine to five traffic and that's problematic, especially if people do not have a nine to five job already. Riding the bus is definitely an opportunity to create climate resiliency through infrastructure by reducing the carbon footprint, but also having some localized designed infrastructure and bus stops with things that we've talked about like bathrooms, green infrastructure and proper ventilation would be ideal. With the different climate change impacts like heavy smoke, bus stops could be great a spot where people can get out of the elements especially if they're from vulnerable populations"

- Pah-tu P.

access in King County from the Metro Mobility Framework indicates that the geographic areas with the greatest need for accessible transit are concentrated in south King County.⁶⁹ Community members who are displaced because of higher housing prices will need to rely more heavily on transportation, both personal and public, to get to where they live, work, and play.

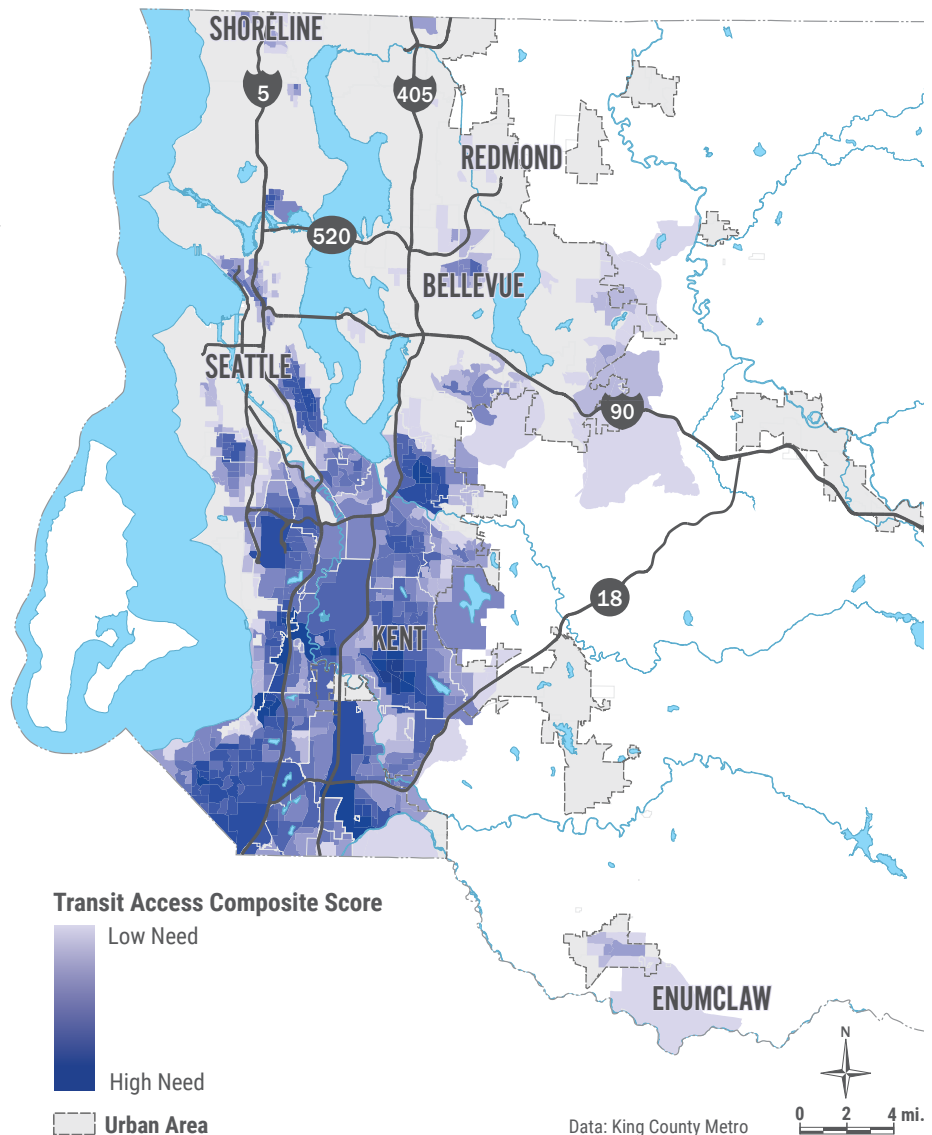
This combination of increased transportation cost burden caused by displacement away from urban centers and inequitable access to public transportation creates negative impacts for frontline communities, especially low-income communities and communities of color that live in south King County. These constraints will be exacerbated as climate impacts, including emergency weather events, are experienced across the County.

Expanding transit accessibility to create opportunities for frontline community members to conveniently use public transit to move around King County, regardless of what neighborhood they live in, will be integral to advancing climate resilience in frontline communities.

In 2019, King County Metro convened a [Mobility Equity Cabinet](#) to develop the [King County Metro Mobility Framework](#), which envisions an integrated, innovative, equitable, and sustainable future. It includes guiding principles and recommended actions to significantly reduce GHG emissions while advancing equitable outcomes by providing mobility where needs are greatest, improving access to public transit to encourage individuals to use transit over single-occupancy



Transit Access in King County



vehicles, and ensuring equitable and affordable fares. The report was released in October 2019 and adopted by the King County Council in March 2020. It will guide updates to Metro’s Strategic Plan for Public Transportation, Service Guidelines, and long-range plan, METRO CONNECTS, as well as the development of Metro’s budget and strategic planning practices.⁷⁰ Two members of the CECTF are also participants in the Mobility Equity Cabinet, and worked to ensure collaboration and coordination across both groups.

The framework for action

The CECTF developed a **vision for Transportation Access and Equity** in an equitable climate future. The vision statements below guided the development of priority actions that identify steps toward reaching climate equity in King County.

- King County’s transit services are resilient, accessible, affordable, and safe for all communities.
- Frontline community members in urban areas can access frequent, accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation near their homes, particularly in areas where community members are most dependent on public transportation.
- Neighborhood-scale micro-mobility improvements allow first mile/last mile trips to and from transit to be safe, affordable, and healthy.
- Frontline communities with high levels of pollution and disproportionate health outcomes are prioritized for zero-emission buses.
- Public transit infrastructure and services are prepared for and able to respond to disproportionate impacts of current and projected changes in extreme weather events on frontline communities, including transit alerts in multiple languages and service adjustments.
- Public transit infrastructure, including bus stops, are designed to shelter from extreme weather, especially in communities who may be disproportionately impacted by those events.
- Anti-displacement policies accompany transit system improvements that may otherwise lead to transit gentrification.

Based on this vision, the following table outlines priority actions in **Expanding Transit Accessibility, Climate Resilient Transit Infrastructure, Prioritizing Community-Driven Transit Development**. Each action identifies key and related County departments and programs that support activities toward



achieving the action, as well as the role of King County as an implementer, convener, and/or supporter/advocate. Additional connections to other sections of the SCAP and considerations are indicated by SCAP-wide icons. Climate resilient, accessible, and equitable public transit is a shared priority with the [Reducing GHG Emissions](#) and [Preparing for Climate Change](#) sections. This work will be coordinated to achieve actions with overlapping outcomes and develop joint performance measures. These actions also reflect the priorities of the CECTF and Metro Mobility Equity Cabinet around strategies in the Metro Mobility Framework.

FOCUS AREA 8: TRANSPORTATION ACCESS AND EQUITY

8.1 Expanding Transit Accessibility

Priority Actions

- SRFC 8.1.1 **Prioritize frontline communities that are in greatest need of public transit in transit accessibility policies and practices. Continue to improve and design accessible communications in multiple languages, enact equitable and affordable fares, and increase mobility by connecting public transit infrastructure.**

Key Departments/Programs: Metro

Related Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, DCHS, DLS

King County Role

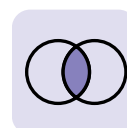


Implement

Connections and Considerations



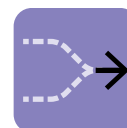
Climate Prep.



Aligning Initiatives



Language Access



Build Equitable Practices

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **8.1 Expanding Transit Accessibility**, as identified by the CECTF, including relevant priorities from the Mobility Framework developed by the Metro Mobility Equity Cabinet:

- Metro will work to minimize the impact of weather-related service changes on disproportionately impacted communities by expanding ethnic media connections and pursuing other opportunities to create and share service-related information to these communities. (Cross-listed, [Prep 3.1.3](#))
- Increase the level of communication about Metro's services, including innovative mobility services and fare products, such as ORCA LIFT, to ensure that people from all communities know about these services and how to use them. (Metro Mobility Framework - #6 Improve access to mobility)
- Prioritize geographic areas that have high density; a high proportion of low-income people, people of color, people with disabilities, and members of limited-English-speaking communities; and that have limited mid-day and evening transit service to schools, jobs, and child care centers and other ways to build wealth and opportunities. (Metro Mobility Framework #1 – Invest Where Needs Are Greatest)

8.2 Climate Resilient Transit Infrastructure

- SRFC 8.2.1 **Improve and develop infrastructure that is climate resilient with a design process that uses a clear climate justice lens in capital planning and design processes and emergency planning.**

Key Departments/Programs: Metro

Related Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, Public Health, DES (OEM)



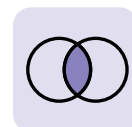
Implement



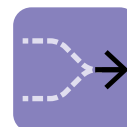
Public Priority



Climate Prep.



Aligning Initiatives






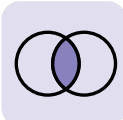


Build Equitable Practices

8.2 Climate Resilient Transit Infrastructure

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **8.2 Climate Resilient Transit Infrastructure**, as identified by the CECTF, including relevant priorities from the Mobility Framework developed by the Metro Mobility Equity Cabinet:

- The Bus Stop Improvements team will develop and incorporate climate change metrics in the process for selecting and prioritizing bus stop shelter improvements. Beginning in 2021, at least 10 percent of the weather-related improvements will be constructed at bus stops in climate priority areas. (Cross-listed, [Prep 3.1.4](#))
- Review transit emergency plans to ensure that Metro is prepared to provide safe and ongoing transportation during natural disasters, weather emergencies, or climate-related crises. Ensure Metro infrastructure and services support community resilience to climate change (Metro Mobility Framework - #4 Ensure Safety).
- Ensure that transit stops and transfer points are designed and located in ways to promote safety, particularly for BIPOC, people with disabilities, limited-English-speaking communities, women, and LGBTQIA people. Conduct ongoing safety review to assess environmental health and potential safety disparities (Metro Mobility Framework - #4 Ensure Safety).

8.3 Prioritizing Community-Driven Transit Development

Priority Actions	King County Role	Connections and Considerations
<div>SRFC 8.3.1</div> <div>Work to ensure the design and planning process of public transit, streetscapes, and accessibility features are community-driven, equitable, minimize displacement, and are built in partnership with frontline communities, including the Metro Mobility Equity Cabinet and the CECTF.</div> <div><i>Key Departments/Programs: Metro</i></div> <div><i>Related Departments/Programs: Climate Action Team, DCHS, Executive Office, PSB, DLS</i></div>	<div></div> <div>Implement</div> <div></div> <div>Convene</div>	<div></div> <div>Reduce Emissions</div> <div></div> <div>Aligning Initiatives</div> <div></div> <div>Community Leadership</div> <div></div> <div>Equitable Climate Future</div>

Activities that could be pursued toward the action in **8.3 Prioritizing Community-Driven Transit Development**, as identified by the CECTF, including relevant priorities from the Mobility Framework developed by the Metro Mobility Equity Cabinet:

- Work to minimize displacement and increase affordable housing options in urban areas near transit by partnering with local jurisdictions and other organizations (Metro Mobility Framework - #5 Encourage dense, affordable housing near transit).
- Use meaningful, inclusive, and community-driven approaches to develop, provide, and evaluate mobility choices and supporting infrastructure that serve low- and no-income people, BIPOC, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, and limited-English-speaking communities in ways that work for them (Metro Mobility Framework - #10 Engage deliberately and transparently).
- Partner with DCHS Equitable Development Program, King County Metro, Green Tools Program, and frontline communities to advance and incentivize equitable transit-oriented communities, prioritize the development of affordable housing as a key component of transit-oriented development projects, and implement sustainable building practices that pair with anti-displacement policies (aligns with [GHG 4.5.1](#), Metro Mobility Framework - #5 Encourage dense, affordable housing near transit).

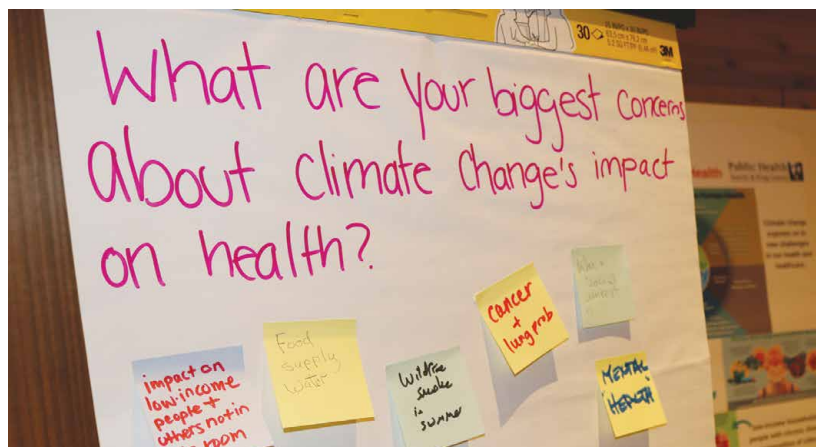
"A lot of the things that our communities have already been asking for like access to healthy food, good transportation, living wage jobs, and affordable housing - all of these basic needs that communities have been advocating for for decades are also climate resilience strategies and also carbon emissions reductions strategies. When we're meeting people's basic needs and when we're planning for people to be healthy and helping them become climate resilient we can actually help to reduce carbon emissions too."

- Katrina P.



"Community leadership and community-driven policy-making are important because frontline communities have the expertise. We're the ones who have experienced these disproportionate impacts for years, and our ancestors have given us the stories, tools, and talents we need to be leaders in this work. Frontline community members are willing to step up and make real, effective decisions for our communities."

- Vera H.



"I like how [the task force members] came together across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. We came together, and we spent time sharing about ourselves and trying to get to know each other a little before we started to do the work and talk about climate impacts we were seeing in our communities. It's been a very collaborative process; it has been a very open process. It's been a process where we've shared things about our communities, our lives."

- Dinah W.

SRFC Section Endnotes

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